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**CONFESSIONS OF A  
WAR CORRESPONDENT**





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*Galicia (Przemysl)  
2 Jan 19*  
The morning. I was to be taken to  
~~the~~ on a military train and I  
would be escorted by Oberleutnant Mückich.



Before we had gone many miles I  
discovered that we were traversing a  
great white way. Jack London may  
tell of the "great white way" in *A*

[See page 7

WHAT AN AUSTRIAN CENSOR, WHO FELT THAT SCISSORS WERE SAFER  
THAN PENCIL, DID TO ONE OF THE PAGES OF A STORY SENT  
BY MR. SHEPHERD FROM PRZEMYSL, IN GALICIA



# CONFESSIONS OF A WAR CORRESPONDENT

BY  
WILLIAM G. SHEPHERD  
CORRESPONDENT OF THE UNITED PRESS

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## PUBLISHERS' NOTE

WHAT do we really know of the Great War? How does the news come to us? These are questions which have occurred to every one who has noted the references to censorship, the contradictory reports, and the strange silences which have characterized the progress of the world war.

There is possibly no one better qualified to lift the veil and show the actual experiences of news-gatherers than Mr. William G. Shepherd.

In his official capacity as correspondent of the United Press Association he was at Antwerp when the German invasion was drawing close, and he gave the news of the city's surrender. He is credited with being the only newspaper representative who saw the first battle of Ypres. He was among the first, if not the first, to obtain permission to visit the British front in France. He visited the German front and was with the Austrians at

## PUBLISHERS' NOTE

Przemysl. He witnessed the dramatic Alpine warfare of the Italians; he described the retreat from Servia, and he visited the great army gathered at Salonica.

These wide experiences with the human equation in war, both as to the fighting men and the impervious censors, have equipped Mr. Shepherd for the presentation of a view which is wholly different from the usual war literature. With his unfailing interest in the purely human side, and his alert sense of humor, he has given us a picturesque narrative rather than the feast of horrors which has become familiar. There is the underlying sense of the grimness of the world tragedy, particularly in the last chapter with its keen analysis of the psychological effects of war, but for the most part Mr. Shepherd takes his readers behind the scenes and shows them the processes, the curious happenings, and the personal side of little-known phases of the war which furnish American readers the tidings spread before them day by day. And necessarily such a narrative affords illuminating glimpses of the methods and development of various great campaigns.

THE FORTY-TWO-CENTIMETER  
BLUE PENCIL



# CONFESSIONS OF A WAR CORRESPONDENT

## THE FORTY-TWO-CENTIMETER BLUE PENCIL

**I** STARTED my war reporting as a censor-fighter.

Censorship distorts the news, and any inexperienced and conscientious war reporter considers himself justified in censor-baiting. He starts out in his career of war reporting as a "bad man," belligerent for truth, feeling that there is a certain holiness in his attitude.

But there is a "sawdust trail" that, after a time, he will hit. Like sin (which a certain evangelist named after a certain legal holiday declares "you can't beat") the censor's big blue pencil will, in time, bring every war reporter to repentance. If he doesn't, then his career as

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a war reporter is irrevocably ended and he'll probably go back home.

You can't be a war reporter in these days and not be "good."

My first experience with war was with little Francisco Madero in Mexico, in 1910; and the first censor that ever put blue pencil to my copy was Madero's agent in Mexico City. The Orozco revolution gave me further experience of censors, and prepared me for the iron-clad censorship which Huerta installed in Mexico City during the days when he sat in the unsteady hammock of the Mexican Presidency and watched "the old cat die."

Then, at Vera Cruz, I spent several months under the censorship of the American army and navy. And from Uncle Sam's kind guidance of my copy I passed to the censorship in Europe.

During the past three years I have been continuously under censorship, even as to my personal correspondence; and when I returned to the United States, recently, I greatly missed having some one to whom I could show the letters I wrote to my mother and friends before dropping them in the mail-box. I felt inclined to ask the nearest policeman or hall-boy—somebody in uniform—to put his O. K. on them.



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I started out, as I have said, a censor-fighter; and it's on the books that I've had my share of luck at the game. But fourteen censorships through which I have passed (and I have written copy that has been censored by three European nations at a time) have taught me a better way, of which I shall write later.

I had had good luck with the Mexicans, and, though I had not tried to beat the American censors at Vera Cruz, for patriotic reasons, I felt my duty to my editors demanded that I outwit all the European censors who came my way.

After a short experience of a few rather newsless days on the Ally side, I went into Germany, and there my first experience confirmed my belief that censors were my enemies, and put me on the offensive against the whole tribe of them. The experience was this:

In the city of Munich I wrote a harmless but colorful story about war conditions in the town and took it to the office of the censor. He was an elderly German colonel, highly decorated, who spoke English excellently. He greeted me effusively, as I laid the copy on the high desk where he stood at work.

"An American!" he exclaimed. "I'm very

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glad to meet you. America to-day is the conscience of the world; all the rest of us have gone mad. It will please me greatly to help you get the truth back to your country. The truth is all that we Germans ask."

He read over my story, folded it up without changing a word, and handed it to me with the envelope.

"You may mail it yourself," he said. "I'm sure I can trust you."

I opened the folded manuscript and started to write the word "Censored" on it.

In a flash his kindness fell away. "Please do not say that your article has been censored," he said. "Let it go, just as it is."

I was forced, of course, to yield to his demand. But there was a lie in that piece of manuscript; the absence of the word "censored" was a lie that warped the news value of my story. The object of omitting that one word was to carry to the outside world the impression that Germany was not hindering newspaper men in their expression of opinion.

Censorship, as I understood it at the time, was intended to cover military and political contingencies; here it was covering a lie which I was being forced to send to a neutral country.



"AMERICA IS THE CONSCIENCE OF THE WORLD; ALL THE REST OF  
US HAVE GONE MAD"



## CONFESSIONS OF A WAR CORRESPONDENT

Let me say, incidentally, that, while I have never known a censor to add words or phrases to a newspaper story that would change its meaning, nevertheless they have often changed the whole intent of a piece of news by clever cutting.

After that experience the entire German system of censorship challenged me. Its great policies of military and political safety I could understand; its petty policy of trying to mold public opinion in small matters only spurred me on to beat it, if possible. I found many other American reporters and correspondents in Germany at that time who felt as I did about the German system. No one resented actions by the censors which prevented reporters from sending news, but the efforts of the censorship system to use the reporters as tools in influencing neutral opinion was highly offensive.

There was another rule of the German censorship which was provoking. I was not allowed to know what had been deleted from my despatches. The frontispiece reproduces a photographic illustration of a page from one of my letters sent to my New York office from Przemyśl, in Galicia, in November, 1914. I do not remember exactly what I wrote in the

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part that has been scissored out; but my subject was the efforts which the Austrians were making, with the use of slaked lime, to stamp out Asiatic cholera. I told how the railroad routes were great "white ways," and how the whiteness of lime covered everything, even the box-cars.

This was the first story I had submitted to an Austrian censor, and I expected, of course, that I should be informed as to whether it would be changed or not. It was not until many months later that I knew how my stuff was being cut. Instead of being taken into the confidence of the censor, all of the writers in our party were looked upon with deep suspicion. Indeed, the whole attitude of the censor was one of distrust and challenge.

There came suddenly one day the retreat from Przemyśl, when we were put on trains and bundled off toward Budapest. We were informed that any stories which pictured our departure from Przemyśl as a hasty retreat would be held up; and there was no way of getting anything out without submitting it to the censor. Here was a story to beat a censor with. In a hotel at Budapest I sat me down to a typewriter and drew forth all my stock of



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slang. I tried to think of the fastest thing that runs, and my mind settled on Kolehmainen, the great Finnish Marathoner. I began my story thus: "Beating it from Przemyśl was one grand Kolehmainen." I wrote thirty paragraphs of the sheerest slang, covering the retreat like a star baseball writer covering a world's series game.

Our language-loving censor, who was inordinately proud of his ability to speak seven tongues, never batted an eye over that copy; the chances were that he did not understand one-third of it; but no man with a head shaped like his ever admitted that there was anything in the world he didn't know. The story went.

I had fully expected that the office in New York would decode, or deslang, the story; but it didn't. Out over the wires to every corner of the United States went the story of that gruesome retreat, written in baseball slang; and several editors wrote to the New York office suggesting that I turn out "some more of that snappy stuff, like the Przemyśl retreat."

The Austrian disliked me when the echoes of that slangy Przemyśl retreat story began to come back to Vienna.

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It did not require many weeks' experience in Europe to indicate to me that a reporter is measured by the tact which he displays in the presentation of his stories to the censor. He is expected to know, to a certain extent, what he shall not notice in his despatches and what it is proper to write about; and my war experience had not continued long before I discovered that censor-fighting was the least productive pastime in which a war reporter could engage.

Many another correspondent was going through the same change of mind. There came a time in the war when I stood with a man at Naples who was shortly to board a boat that would take him directly to the foot of Twenty-third Street in New York. In my pocket I had a story which I had secured and written with considerable labor, and I had only to give him the manuscript and ask him to drop it in a mail-box in New York. But I did not yield to the temptation. Beating the censor is a crime that will out; the first turn of the printing-press that is running off the story is evidence against you.

A strict watch is kept on the newspapers here in the United States by all the belligerent

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governments. Before the break Germany kept especially sharp eyes on the work of American correspondents in Berlin. Every word that is written about the war by correspondents in the warring countries is carefully analyzed by both sides, and woe to the war reporter in Europe who goes wrong. The censor-fighting spirit will be taken out of him very quickly. The Foreign Office will hear of any delinquency on his part in short order, and he will be put on the carpet, if not sent home.

Not long ago in Berlin an American correspondent was haled before an outraged censor who showed him a clipping of one of his stories, taken from an American country newspaper. The head-line of the story—which had been stolen by the country newspaper from a metropolitan daily—was highly pro-enemy, and the country editor, in sarcastic vein, had black-typed certain sentences in such a way as to make it appear that he considered them preposterous and unworthy of belief. The correspondent had to explain, at great length, that he had not sent the story to the little country newspaper, and that he was not responsible for the head-lines and the blackened type. Fully six weeks passed before this correspond-

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ent was finally assured that the German War Office did not hold him responsible for the story, six weeks being the time required for an agent in the United States to look up the little newspaper in question and verify the correspondent's explanation.

In the early days of the war, when everything was new and every word was news, the censor was the correspondent's open enemy. The censors made no bones about it. They were afraid of correspondents and—well, the correspondents were afraid of the censors.

A certain New York newspaper manager, who felt that he was not getting a sufficient news return for the money he was spending, got on a boat, a month or so after the war had started, determined to go to London and have it out with the censors. He felt that a little New York vim was needed in his London bureau. "I'm going to pull a little fast New York stuff," he said. With his London manager he went to the censor's bureau. It was only by a persistent clamor that they reached a bureau censor.

"Now look here," said the New York man, "my newspapers are not trying to harm the British Government. We want to work with

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the censor, not against him. Won't you tell us how we can co-operate with the censor?"

"My dear man," said the Britisher, "we don't need any co-operation. This is purely a one-sided affair. Good day."

Every word of war news which comes from Europe to the eyes of the American public has been weighed by censors as carefully as precious stones are weighed by diamond merchants. One tiny word, or arrangement of words may send to the bottom of the sea a great ship or may cost the lives of thousands of men in the field. It's all up to the censor. As he sits at his table with telegrams, letters, and the stories of newspaper correspondents passing under his gaze, and with the weight of his country's welfare resting, to no small extent, on his shoulders, every little nervous fear of treachery, every whim of his mind, is expressed by his use of scissors or blue pencil.

"*Father is dead*," ran a cablegram from Sweden to New York which passed through the British censorship.

For some inexplicable reason the censor didn't like the word "dead." He changed it to "deceased."

Within a short time this question, sent from

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New York to Sweden, passed through the hands of the same censor: "*Is father dead or deceased?*"

What did that word "dead" mean? It might have covered a whole volume of enemy news; it might have provoked a disaster on land or sea. And yet the censor had no better reason for cutting it out than a certain "hunch" which came over him that the word ought to be changed.

The more I see of the censor's job, the more I sympathize with the censor, and the more I prefer to be the man who writes the stuff rather than the one who censors it. The mistakes of a writing man in war-time can hardly be fatal, but the error of a censor may flame out in a catastrophe at any time. With unlimited power, he has the right to give himself the benefit of the doubt every time a doubt rises.

An excellent illustration of how the censors are always on the alert comes to my mind in connection with an interview that I had with Winston Churchill when he was First Lord of the British Admiralty in the early war days. During the many visits I paid to the dusty and historic old Admiralty Building and the several conferences I had with Churchill in his private office, I began to feel at home in Admiralty



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surroundings. I became acquainted with a number of secretaries. I chatted with them in the hallways. I was introduced to some important officials who knew that I was preparing an important article for American newspapers. Usually it was an extremely difficult matter even to enter the doors at the Admiralty Building; but the doormen and the policemen in the hallways, knowing my important mission, always greeted me pleasantly and permitted me to pass without question.

I proudly felt that I had been taken into the confidence of all the Admiralty folk about me, and I'd undergo shooting to-day rather than tell, even at this late time, some of the matters which came to my knowledge during that pleasant two weeks.

At last the interview was finished and written exactly as it was to go. Mr. Churchill, one evening at five o'clock, put his signature to it, called his secretary and said: "Please take Mr. Shepherd to the censor's office and introduce him. Tell the censor that the interview with me is all right."

I was led through a maze of gloomy hallways, lighted in part by gas, to a doorway which bore the legend "Naval Censor."

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"This is Sir So-and-So, the naval censor," said the secretary, presenting me to a strong-featured, iron-gray-haired man. "This is Mr. Shepherd, an American journalist, who is sending an interview with the First Lord to America to-night."

"Very well," said the man of title, "we'll take care of it."

"I want to write just a few words to lead the story," I said. I explained that my manuscript contained only the interview, and that it would be necessary to write a short introduction.

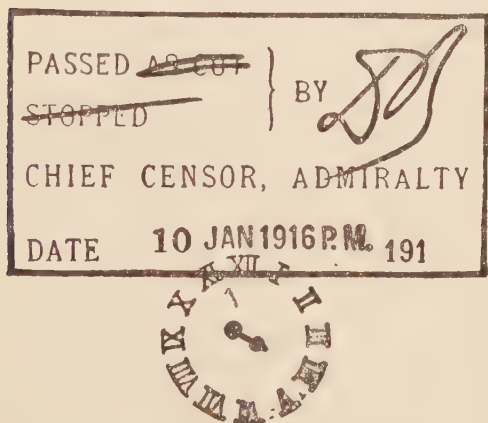
For the first time in my two weeks around the Admiralty I saw distrust in the eyes of an Admiralty man. The policemen at the door might have trusted me; that was their business. The secretaries might have done the same; that was their lookout. Winston Churchill might have placed confidence in my journalistic integrity; Churchill could do as he pleased. But as for himself, he was neither a policeman, a secretary, nor the First Lord: he was the censor, whose duty is to mistrust. He was the last sieve through which my work was to pass. If I were pro-German and mine a spy's work, now was the last chance to stop it. He read the manuscript carefully.

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When he had finished he looked up into my face and said, "You want to write an introduction to this, huh?"

"Yes," I answered. "It starts out too abruptly for an American newspaper story."

He hesitated a minute. Then he said: "All



THE SEAL OF THE BRITISH ADMIRALTY, SHOWING  
SIR DOUGLAS BROWNRIG'S "TIME-CLOCK"

right. Write it here. But, listen! No flub-dub!" He looked me squarely in the eye.

I knew what he meant by that phrase "no flubdub." He meant: "These fellows around here may trust you, but I don't. I'm the censor and you're a newspaper man. Every re-

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porter's a wrong un to me until he proves he's right. I know you've got an interview with the First Lord of the British Admiralty. I know it's what you call a big newspaper stunt, and that by to-morrow morning it will be read by millions and millions of human beings in many languages, and that it will be telling England's side of the war to the world. But none of that impresses me. I'm not going to give you the benefit of any doubt. If you are a wrong un, look out!"

"Write an introduction yourself," I suggested.

"Go ahead with yours," he said, grimly.

I wrote, with a lead-pencil, at the head of the article, these words, "Winston Churchill, First Lord of the British Admiralty, granted me an interview to-day," and pushed the copy over to him.

"Is that all?" he said, more gently.

"I can't think of any more to say," I answered.

"Very good," he said, smiling, as I rose to go. "I was afraid you were going to write something intricate."

He telephoned to the cable-office, ordered that the interview be given right of way, and within forty-five minutes the story was in New York.

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He had been protecting England and himself. As a censor he was a hundred-per-center. But he was not a friend of newspaper men. A good censor and a good war reporter can never be real friends—unless the war reporter is working with his own army and is moved by patriotism.

Considering the censor's responsibility, it is always a source of wonder to me that he ever lets anything go through. In my extensive dealings with censors I have been more surprised at what they have permitted me to send than at what they have cut out. Whatever success any of the American correspondents have had in getting "tough" war stories past the censor has grown out of the fact that they sympathized with him and tried to get his viewpoint.

In the office of a great news association recently the editor showed me a pile of type-written copy which had been sent by mail from



SEAL OF THE KAISER'S CENSORS. PLACED AT THE TOP AND BOTTOM OF ALL STORIES

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a certain capital in Europe. The signature of a censor was at the bottom of each page, but not one word of the several thousand had been touched with a blue pencil.

“The censors hardly ever touch our stuff, now,” explained the editor. “Early in the war it used to be all chopped up, but it comes pretty clean these days.”

This editor did not mean to say that the censorship had become lax. He knew as well as I did that the reason for the untouched pages was that the correspondents in Europe had learned to take the censor’s viewpoint and to see the war through the censor’s eyes. The American correspondent in any of the European countries these days knows very well that *it does not pay to try to beat the censor*. This is the one big fact that stands out just now in the war correspondent’s life.

Not many months ago an American correspondent left New York for London, carrying a code for the use of his London office. By means of this code the New York office hoped to receive more complete news of the sinking of ships than the censor had permitted to go out. At the risk of a severe penalty, the New York reporter had got the code past the port au-

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thorities, and he slammed it down triumphantly on the desk of the London manager.

"There's a code that 'll beat 'em all," said the New-Yorker.

The experienced London manager, with an expression of long-suffering patience on his face (for his New York office had been clamoring persistently for "more news"), took the precious papers, slowly tore them into bits, and tossed them into the glowing fireplace.

"Nothing like that around here," he said. "If our papers print more news about the sinking of ships than the other papers do our crime 'll stand out like a sore thumb. The better a code is, the more dangerous it is."

It is the personal equation in censorship that has made the institution so difficult to systematize and regulate. That single individual with his blue pencil, his fears and whims, and his personal outlook on life, cannot always be analyzed.

In a little château at Goritzia, on the Austro-Italian front, not many months ago, the Austrian staff-officers gave an after-dinner concert for a few correspondents. The staff-officer who acted as censor was not a music-



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lover and he departed from the gathering before the program was ended. The finale was an "Ave Maria," exquisitely played by piano, 'cello, and several violins, and the effect was highly sentimental. The next day one of the correspondents, writing of the concert, told how thoughts of home and loved ones had come over the war-bound officers as they had listened to the strains of the beautiful old air. He wrote that "chins dropped to chests and heads were bowed, in contemplation and reverie, while the cannon boomed out above the sad music."

"No 'chins dropped to chests' in that crowd," said the non-music-loving censor, as he read the story. "I don't want the world to think that Austrian officers ever feel sad." And his blue pencil cut out every reference to the sweet spell which the music, amid the sound of guns, had thrown over the Austrian leaders.

Very often the personal pride of a censor in his ability to read and write a foreign language will appear in his work. A certain American correspondent, describing the spring flowers in the vicinity of the trenches, wrote of anemones, violets, and "john-quills." Evidently the misspelling hurt the French censor as much as it hurts an American reader, for, in a firm, ag-



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gressive script, he dashed out the offending word and wrote over it the letters, J-O-N-Q-U-I-L-S.

An Austrian censor, when I wrote the word "worshipper," cut out one "p." The dictionary discloses that we were both right, as the word is variant.

Cub censors will invariably thrust forward their personal opinion in their work.

"Go to Vienna and discover why the Austrians will not permit Emmy Destinn to come to the United States," was an assignment which an American correspondent in Berlin received some time ago from his New York office. The correspondent complied and secured a highly interesting story: the Austrians, he explained, felt that Destinn had not shown as much loyalty to the Austrian cause as might have been expected of her, and so the permission that had been granted her to come to the United States had been revoked. The reporter put the story through the Austrian censor and telegraphed it to Berlin, to be forwarded from there by wireless. When he returned to Berlin, two days later, he found that the story was being held up in the office of the German censor.

"What's the matter with that story?" he

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demand of the censor who had held it. "The Austrian censors passed it all right."

"Well, they were wrong in doing it," said the censor. "You're painting this woman as a martyr."

"Give me the copy," said the reporter. He took it to the office of Count George Wedel, the chief censor, a patron of music in Germany, and related his troubles.

"Why, the —— fool," said Count Wedel. "Every person in the United States who loves music has a right to know why Destinn isn't singing to them this year." And he permitted the story to pass.

Later investigation disclosed that the man who had stopped the story was acting as a temporary censor and had been on the job only two days.

In the days of the enmity between correspondents and censors, when life was one long fight between them, Karl H. von Wiegand, the noted Berlin correspondent, achieved, perhaps, the biggest defeat of the censorship that will be recorded in the war. It is not generally known that von Wiegand's interview with the Crown Prince of Germany had to be smuggled out of the country. Von Wiegand reached the

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Crown Prince through unofficial channels and, after talking with him for several hours, returned to Berlin and wrote his story, in his office at 77 Zimmerstrasse. Before many hours had elapsed angry officialdom learned that von Wiegand had talked with the Crown Prince without its permission and was writing a story about the visit.

The censor of the Foreign Office sent to von Wiegand's office, demanding that the story be turned over to the censor. Von Wiegand refused and said that he would not discuss the matter with any less person than the chief censor himself. As soon as the censor had left his office von Wiegand hired a courier and started him on his way to Holland with the story. The courier got through, and when von Wiegand learned that the story had safely reached London he took a copy of the interview to the Foreign Office and submitted it, saying: "You may cut this copy as you like. My story is on the way to the United States by this time."

Very often the censors themselves did not know their own aims. Great crises of the war, arising suddenly, sometimes upset them. The censorship jumble about the first raid on Lon-

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don is as good an illustration of the early-war irregularities of censorship as can be found.

The British, let me say, are inclined to put a correspondent on his honor; or, at least, they are inclined to let him go as far as he wants to and then expect him to suffer whatever punishment he brings to himself, if he goes too far. On the night of September 8, 1915, a Zeppelin, hovering over London, gave the city its first taste of death from the skies. The Zeppelin had hardly disappeared before the Press Bureau sent word to all the newspapers and to the American and other correspondents that they were not even to submit to the censor any stories of the raid, much less publish or cable them. The Press Bureau then sent out a short, formal statement saying that a Zeppelin had visited the eastern counties.

Bursting with our stories, we American reporters found it impossible to contain ourselves. Several of us did submit stories, and I have heard that several correspondents were threatened with punishment for having done so. I was among those who gave a story to the censor. I wrote that story, weighing every word, just as the censor would weigh it. I did not give localities; I did not tell what the Zeppelin

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had done to London, but what it had done to the minds of London people. London had been brave—and I said so; London had got mad, instead of scared, and recruiting began to jump that very evening—and I said that, too. And twenty-four hours later, to my great delight, I learned by cable from New York that my Zeppelin-raid story had gone through and had been the only story to reach New York. I attribute my success with that story to the fact that I put myself in an Englishman's place and wrote the story as he would have written it.

I got over a second story about the raid the next day. I had an engagement to interview Marconi the morning after the raid; I had planned to ask him questions about the use of wireless in the war. When I entered his office I found him sleepy and fagged.

"I was up until an unearthly hour this morning," he said.

"Did you chase the Zeppelin?" I asked.

"Everywhere!" he exclaimed. "I got a taxicab, and I went to all the fires and I saw all the horrible sights."

"Mr. Marconi," I said, "you and Count Zeppelin are the two most picturesque inventors of this century. Will you tell me, for publica-

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tion, what you think of the work of your fellow-inventor, from what you saw last night?"

"Thank God," said Marconi, ardently, "they can't use my invention to kill women and children, as they used Zeppelin's last night. If I were Zeppelin I would demand of my emperor that he cease the use of my invention for such terrible purposes."

There was my Zeppelin-raid story. In Marconi's own words I cabled a description of the fires and deaths in the heart of London. And not a word was changed by the censor; it was the kind of a story, I think, that the censor would have liked to send out himself.

An interesting sidelight on censorship as it affects the British newspapers grew out of the Zeppelin raid. The Zeppelin passed almost directly over the office of the London *Times*, the most famous newspaper in Christendom. From the windows of the *Times* the reporters and editors saw, enacted all about them, the biggest newspaper story that ever broke in London. And yet they did not dare to publish a word of it!

Two weeks later the Zeppelin-raid story which I had sent to New York reached London, in the American newspapers, and was dis-

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covered by Fred Wile, of the London *Daily Mail*. Rushing to the *Mail* office in a taxicab, Wile sent the story out to the composing-room, and it appeared the next morning; it was the first story, aside from official statements, that was printed in London about the raid. Later in the day the staid old *Times*, over whose very roof and about whose very walls the thing had actually happened, telephoned to Mr. E. L. Keen, manager of the United Press in London, saying:

“We’re very sorry you didn’t give us that London-raid story from New York. When you get any stories like that, hereafter, please give us a chance at them.”

The *Times* men could have written a story that would have excelled mine; they had witnessed the chief events of the raid, and I had not. But my story possessed the invaluable advantage of having been passed upon by the censor and thereby having been rendered “safe.” Neither literary merit nor actual news was what the *Times* liked in the story; it was its “safeness” that appealed to them.

The hit-or-miss system of censorship was bound to be improved as the war went on. Each nation of Europe was willing and, indeed,



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anxious, to keep the newspaper correspondents from neutral countries in a happy frame of mind. Field-officers, Foreign Office officials, and men of other departments of government did their best to please the correspondents, and they soon discovered that one unreasonable censor could undo all their efforts to make correspondents feel at home.

Sir Stanley Buckmaster, later the Lord Chief Justice, became the chief censor in England after the war had been going on for some months. It was all a new game to him, and he frankly confessed, in the presence of correspondents, that he didn't fully understand it.

"I think," he said, "this very minute, I know every secret of the British army and the British navy. I suppose some of these secrets would be worth thousands of pounds to me, if I were a spy and if I were able to get them to the Germans within a short time. Just for fun, the other evening, one of the censors and I tried to figure out just how we could help the Germans with the information we had. There wasn't a way we could have made one penny, as spies, for, owing to the censorship, it would have been impossible for us to get a single fact to the Germans quickly enough to



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make the information of any value. I know the censorship is pretty hard on you newspaper men, now and then, and perhaps it is harder because we don't fully understand how to work it; but you've no idea how necessary an iron-clad censorship really is in war-time."



SEAL OF THE BRITISH ARMY CENSOR  
IN THE FIELD

It has been such straightforward talk as this from censors that has helped the successful American correspondent in Europe to get the censor's viewpoint.

The censorship which the twentieth-century war correspondent faces to-day is a new, twentieth-century sort.

In all the warring countries, except Italy, which is ridden with suspicion, correspondents now have an opportunity to appeal against the censor's blue pencil.

In Germany the American correspondents were all under parole, having given their word of honor that they would not send one written word out of Germany that had not

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first been submitted to the censor, and that they themselves would not leave the country, at any time, without the permission of the Government.

In return for this promise they were granted the right to appeal from the censor who had cut their story to Baron von Radowitz, censor-in-chief. And, further, they might appeal from him to the Foreign Office in extreme cases of disagreement.

One eminently fair rule of the German censorship in latter times was that a copy of the correspondent's story showing all the changes which had been made in it should be sent to him as soon as possible after the censoring is completed.

The Allies also have the same rule. The correspondents in London and Paris may go to the censor's office at any time and learn what changes, if any, have been made in their despatches.

It ought to be a matter of pride to American army officials that the censorship rules of the American army are followed faithfully in Germany and Austria and, to some extent, in England and France. For this reason American correspondents in Europe these days are able

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to make little complaint against censorship regulations.

The campaign of the Allies in Macedonia, a year ago, saw the last of the unparoled, uncredentialed war correspondent. The corre-



SEAL OF THE FRENCH ARMY CENSOR

spondents who were in Salonica dodged credentials as long as they could. We learned that those highly prized documents for which we begged in the early days of the war were, in reality, millstones about our necks.

When General Sarrail seized the consulates of the Central Powers in Salonica, after the first Austrian aeroplane raid on the town, there were a few of us uncredentialed correspondents who were able to dash to the telegraph-office and send

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out to the world the story of the latest sensational turn in Greece. But there were a large number of other correspondents—those who bore credentials and had the dignity of official assignment to the British-French expedition—who were forced to find an English censor and get him to put his O. K. on their stories before they could take them to the cable-office. Our stories often beat theirs by many hours.

But we were all sifted out, at last. Those of us who remained in Greece were forced to accept credentials and give parole that all stories would be submitted to the censor. And so in Greece passed the last of free-lance war corresponding in Europe.

The day of censor-fighting is over. We are all "good," now.

The censor tries to please us and we try to please him. As for the public, its children will perhaps be spanked in school, a hundred years from now, for not learning out of history-books the facts which the European censors have not permitted American newspaper correspondents to send to America in this year of grace 1917.

The situation does not please us any more than it pleases the newspaper- and magazine-reading public.

## CONFESSIONS OF A WAR CORRESPONDENT

But there's nothing to be done about it.

War is war.

"You seem to have arrived at the point where you sympathize with the censor," said one of my editors, after reading certain parts of what I have written above.

I don't exactly sympathize with the censor. But I have seen enough of war to know that the side which dropped censorship would be immediately defeated on land and sea.

I don't sympathize with the censor, but, with most other American correspondents in Europe, I have got his viewpoint. We agree with him that his blue pencil is mightier than the forty-two-centimeter gun.

P. B. ROOM '11	
No.	52533
5 - MAR 1916	
Recd	<u>10/6</u> .M.
Despd	<u>16 15/2</u> .M.

SEAL OF THE BRITISH PRESS  
BUREAU CENSOR



WHAT WAR CORRESPONDENTS  
REALLY SEE





## WHAT WAR CORRESPONDENTS REALLY SEE

**I**T is Sunday, September 5, 1914. With another American correspondent, earlier in the day, I have stood in the middle of the Avenue de l'Opéra and looked about at the avenue, the side streets, and the doors and windows of the buildings. Not a human being is in sight except ourselves. The prairies of Texas were never more silent.

The fate of Paris is hanging by a thread, with the outside world looking on. The Germans have been coming toward us daily. Ten, fifteen, twenty miles they have come nearer to us each twenty-four hours. We, with a half-dozen others, are the only correspondents, of any nationality, in the French capital; the others have all followed the French Government down to Bordeaux. Between us we represent all the newspapers in the United States with their millions of readers. They are looking to

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us to give them, first hand, the news of the first round of this world's-championship fight which they, with the rest of the civilized world, believe may end in a knockout.

And all we can do is to walk aimlessly about the deserted streets and listen to the rumble of distant guns. We do not know whether these guns are French or German; we do not know how near the Germans really are; we do not know how long Paris can hold out. There is no one to go to for information. We cannot leave the city and make a try for the front, because we have no military passes. We know nothing about what is going on around us, and the United States must go without news so far as we are concerned.

That night a few of us sat in the lobby of a hotel, under the beams of one little electric light which the porter was operating for our benefit, and listened to an American magazine editor tell how his magazine had grown from small beginnings to a great position in the magazine world. The Germans might be in Paris the next day, but we had tired of talking about things we knew nothing of.

Our talk was interrupted at one stage by a correspondent who had spent the evening with

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a French censor in a restaurant near the War Office in the hope of getting news.

"Nothing to report," said Dawson. "He doesn't know anything more about what's going on than we do."

When our party broke up, tired with much talking and smoking, at two o'clock on Monday morning, we expected to see German soldiers in the French capital within twenty-four hours.

The next day, at three in the afternoon, the French *communiqué*, which had been issued in Bordeaux and telegraphed to Paris for distribution among the few correspondents who had remained there, reached our hands. I have a copy of that *communiqué*, which I am saving as one of the relics of the Great War. It says in effect—this *communiqué* of the afternoon of Monday, September 6, 1914:

Our advance troops defending Paris have come in contact with forces of the right wing of the Germans. The small engagement has resulted to our advantage.

That was all. "The small engagement"; "our advantage." And yet every school-boy in future years will know that on that Sunday evening and the following day, by a mighty conflict, Paris was being saved.

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The Gallieni taxicabs, which will take their place in history with the geese that saved Rome, were gathering near Napoleon's tomb to carry the army of Paris out to the front at Meaux. Manoury's army was swinging past Paris to the north of us and was crashing into the German flank. Things were happening within a few miles of us to make glad the hearts of Frenchmen for a thousand years. An adventure of an entire twentieth-century nation was coming to a good and thrilling close. The crisis of the world's greatest war was being decided.

And we war correspondents, in the midst of it, did not know what was going on! The only news we had discovered in those two great days was that little forty-four-word *communiqué* with its "little engagement" and "our advantage."

"It will take more than a 'little engagement' resulting to 'our advantage' to save this town," we decided. But in due time, which means several days, we learned that there was a world of news we did not know in that forty-four-word message.

A new determination grew up in our hearts in Paris. We decided that it was an unendur-

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able humiliation to be in the midst of great affairs and not see them or even know that they were going on. It was a spur, that humiliation. It spurred seventeen of us into trouble. Each man for himself decided that he must get out and see things. We did not confer, for after the saving of Paris, competition between the correspondents became bitterly keen. It was an individual but unanimous determination.

How it was that all of us decided upon the same geographical point for carrying out our resolve to see things remains a mystery; but ten days after the salvation of Paris had been effected, the French army commander at Villers-Cotterets, on the afternoon of September 18th, began to receive reports from various parts of his line that certain mysterious male persons, who bore the credentials of American war correspondents, were being arrested, without passes, in considerable numbers. Such persons were as unwelcome to a French army commander at that time—and they have been ever since, more or less—as a plague of grasshoppers to a Kansas farmer. Before midnight the French and British had arrested seventeen of us, who, taking our destinies into our own hands, had come to the front “for to see and for to admire.”

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The few of us who were arrested by the British were lucky: we were permitted to remain in the town after giving our parole not to attempt to pass beyond the town limits. The correspondents who were arrested by the French were sent back to Paris without delay.

For five days I looked on while the town's buildings shook like jelly-moulds under the pulse and throb of thousands of auto-'buses; while armies of men on horseback, afoot, in autos, passed through the streets. Senegalese in bright robes; Arabs on horse-show horses; French Zouaves in red and yellow; French soldiers in bright blue and violent crimson—they passed back and forth, an unending tide, a super-circus parade.

I did not know what it all meant. I did not know what was going on. I saw the village priest march before six men who were being led out to be shot as spies, but I did not follow to see the execution. I saw a dozen German spies who had been arrested, one after another, somewhat as we correspondents had been arrested on that fateful September 18th, and I heard a French officer say, "There is some particular thing the Germans are trying to find out over here, and they will send over man after

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man until one of them gets back to them alive." But I was in as great ignorance as the Germans of what all the great to-do really signified.

In five days I got three feature stories, which I sent back to the United States. One told of the brave little priest and his work among the wounded and suffering; another of how unconcerned were the German spies whom I had seen awaiting death; and the third described a French chef who was cooking a meal in a grape-arbor with the steam from the coffee-tank settling in bead moisture on the cool white grapes above his head.

Those were all the stories I got out of seeing things first hand at Villers-Cotterets.

And I was glad to get them. If I had tried to get any more exact stories, to delve into the situation in true reporter fashion, I should have wound up in a cell for seeking information in regard to military secrets.

I discovered, some days later in Paris, from an official *communiqué*, that Villers-Cotterets, while I had been held there, was the pivot of a turning movement in the battle along the Aisne. Also, I decided, no matter how great the humiliation might have been of remaining



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in Paris in those great days without seeing anything at first hand, there might be even greater disappointment and humiliation in seeing things and not knowing what they meant.

To see or not to see became an important question with every correspondent at this early stage of the war, and it hasn't yet lost its importance. "How much do you fellows really know of what is going on around you? How much do you really see?" are questions which are flung at returning war correspondents both by their lecture audiences and by their friends who seek to get behind the scenes in the war correspondent's life and work.

Only too often, I admit, we do not see big events at first hand; but seeing them, being present in person, does not always assist a correspondent to get at the inwardness of what is going on.

I stood on a hill at Scherpenberg, Belgium, a few miles south of Ypres, during the second battle of Ypres, in April of 1915, and saw forty miles of battle. The rattle of rifle-fire, the pounding of machine-guns, and the thunder of thousands of artillery pieces filled the air with sound-waves that beat against my very insides. It was a battle; that was all I knew



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of it. How it was going, who was winning, what strategy was being used, and what tactics, I did not know. Neither did the officers about me know these things. Two American military attachés who were present seemed to be in equal doubt.

A little man, white-haired and white-mustached, rode up to the foot of the steep slope, dismounted from his horse, and climbed the hill to watch the fighting. He was General Sir John French, commander-in-chief of the British army, creator of the battle we were beholding. He was as calm and cool as any man who viewed the battle that day.

And I have always doubted whether he could tell from what he saw from the hill how his forty-mile battle was going. Back in his headquarters, thirty miles away, trusted men bending over maps in a room that was lined with busy telephones were watching the battle and knew exactly what was happening. Couriers came occasionally to the general with despatches that told him what was going on; but I have always felt sure that General French came to the front that day merely to hear the noise and see the physical manifestation of his own handiwork. He was scalloping the line

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of the forty-mile horizon with shell smoke as a housekeeper with her tiny shears scallops the edge of a table-cover.

It was a sight for any man to see, especially for the men who had created it. Napoleon, Cæsar, Alexander—none of them ever saw such a sight as this. In all the landscape before us men were dying like mere germs; human life was at the lowest quotation it has ever been in civilization's history. Somewhere down there poison gas was being used for the first time, so the telephone said. At some point before our gaze ten thousand Canadians, caught in a German trap, were being slaughtered, and at another point ten thousand Germans were being wiped out. Looking through our glasses, we could see in distant trenches the back of British soldiers, men who were to die in a charge that night.

Give Cæsar this mass of machinery; these massive guns that shoot as far as his cavalry could have moved in half a day; these aeroplanes; these clouds of deadly gas; this network of telephone wires; these wireless towers that talk with the aeroplanes in the sky; these rubber-tired horseless chariots that can move fifty thousand men ten miles in one hour; this

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system of railroads that run back a hundred miles behind the front line, and the system of transport ships that run back to England; this hospital system by which a man when wounded is tenderly carried back to safety and nursed like a baby instead of being left to die or being kindly killed as were the legionaries of Rome; give Cæsar this battle-line, forty miles wide and ten miles thick, with fighting so intense that most of it must be done underground—and how would the great Cæsar have finished this afternoon's battle?

But seeing it gave only meager understanding of it. Our ears, our eyes, and, to a certain extent, our noses, helped us to sense what was going on, but it was too gigantic to be taken in by the senses alone. The imagination of man, working through the centuries, had produced this machinery of war, and it was by imagination alone, founded on a mass of small facts, that one was able to understand what this machinery now in full and ponderously terrible operation was accomplishing. In the story which I cabled to America that night—the first story that had been sent from a battle-field in the course of the war—I made no pretense at telling the military purposes of what I had

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seen; I avoided the fashion of the old-time war correspondents who criticized and analyzed as dramatic critics do at a first night. I could only tell what I had seen, heard, and smelled that day. To tell what the battle meant and how it was going was beyond me, as it was beyond every one else, except the men bending over the maps at headquarters. From these men, two days later, I got something of the real story; they were just beginning then to get the facts together.

There are times when it is impossible for a correspondent to see his story; when to see it would mean to lose it.

A young man of the vague nationality of the Levant came into my room one winter day in Salonica, wild-eyed and covered with mud and the marks of Macedonian travel.

"The Bulgars have got Monastir," he said, "but I broke through their lines, and I have been traveling on foot five days to reach Salonica. When they came into town they broke into the American Red Cross store-room, tore down the American flag, and drew a sword on the American Red Cross men in charge, and made them turn over a lot of Red Cross flour to them."

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The story was a long and exciting one, but I had known him in Monastir, and knew that I could believe him. Therefore I put the story of the attack on the cable, and Americans were reading it within a few hours. I introduced my story by saying, "A report which reached Salonica to-day indicates that the American flag has been torn down and insulted at Monastir by Bulgarian soldiers." Later events proved that the story as I sent it was true in every detail, but some weeks later I received, in my usual batch of anonymous correspondence, a letter from the United States signed "A Bulgar Girl," in which I was severely criticized for having sent such a story without having myself witnessed the incident.

"You war correspondents are always telling us what somebody else has seen and told you. Why don't you go out and see things yourselves?" wrote "A Bulgar Girl."

Her question was a fair one. But in the instance to which she referred, no correspondent would have tried to break through the strong line of her Bulgarian brothers' advance to attempt to witness an incident that had already happened.

There was a little coffee-house at Monastir,

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where a few of us spent our evenings in those days of November, 1915, when the Bulgars were just about to pounce on that quaint and ancient city and we were just about to leave it. The door opened late one night, and when the blast of fresh air had blown away the fog of Servian tobacco smoke, we saw a group of travel-stained men and women file in through the entrance, their faces strained but smiling.

"We come from Ushkib," one of the travelers explained. "We have come by horse and on foot. The roads are lined with horrors, and it is only by God's grace that we are here. All the folk in Servia are fleeing from the Bulgars."

Up to the north of us, a hundred miles, say, we learned men, women, and children were dying from exposure and hunger, and such horrors were occurring as the world had not known for many centuries. Up there somewhere in the ruck we knew there was an American newspaper man who had been seeing it all. Would he scoop us? Ought we to go and see the thing with our own eyes? I telegraphed the story of the travelers to Athens, where it was put on the cables for the United States. This was the first story that reached the outside world of the Gethsemane through which

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the Servian nation was passing. Then I went to bed to think it out.

The next morning we went out of the city along the road to see if more refugees from Servia were coming. We met them, a small group, tired almost to exhaustion, hungry, dirty, and sleepy, after twenty days of hardship. They were too worried or too happy at reaching safety to talk intelligently about what they had seen, so we helped them to stir up the dust on the road back to Monastir, and, an hour later, we got their story in the coffee-house, after they had intoxicated themselves with hot coffee and food, and put the story on the wire. The London evening newspapers carried seven-column heads on these stories of the Servian hegira—an unheard-of display of headlines in England.

I decided not to go into the mountains. The coffee-house at Monastir was the place for me. There I could get a new story daily with all the latest developments. Monastir, besides, was the end of the telegraph lines.

“Always stick to the end of the cable,” was one of Richard Harding Davis’s maxims. “Somebody will always come along to you with a story.”



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But to see things is the main effort of all the correspondents in Europe. To get to the front is the correspondent's chief object in life, and to attain this object it is often necessary to pass through a sea of social activities, including teas, calls, and conferences, in which stormy journey the correspondent lays aside his knee-breeches and belted coat, and appears, most of the time, in afternoon clothes or his claw-hammer. That's the way things are done in Europe.

I have been to teas in Paris, London, Berlin, Vienna, Rome, and Budapest, and at every function I felt—nay, knew—that I and my fellow correspondents were being looked over and measured as to our individual intelligence, our appearance, our leaning, our appetites, and all other points in which we might appear to good or ill advantage. Many a war correspondent's fate in Europe has been settled at some afternoon tea. And the teas are still going on.

In London there is a certain weekly tea in a little old hotel in Pall Mall where reliable correspondents from America are always welcome and where, from time to time, they meet some of the leading British statesmen and, in an in-



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formal way, are put in the way of getting proper information and are also measured up by the officials who have to do with newspaper correspondents. This London tea has been of inestimable benefit to the American newspaper correspondents. Whatever is said at these teas is secret. I have heard some of the chief statesmen of England chatting at these affairs, dropping remarks that might electrify the world; but never has an American correspondent taken advantage of anything he has heard on these occasions.

It was at a weekly tea given by the wife of a government official that the American correspondents now in good standing in Berlin first proved themselves worthy of trust. I notice that the American writers who are now most greatly favored by the German military authorities are the same chaps who, when these teas were started in the fall of 1914, attended them most religiously, even if attendance did mean going home and getting into your one-button frock coat and high hat. New York editors laughed at the "society game," as some of them called it; but, in the main, it was the society game that turned the trick. In time New York editors recognized this fact; after

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losing my evening clothes in a trunk which the Italian railroads lost sight of, I put a new evening layout on my expense account, and got away with it.

Yet all this social and diplomatic struggle to win the favor of going to the front results, if it is successful, more in *kudos* for the correspondent than in real news for his papers. The war is so vast and the things which a correspondent can see with his own eyes are, proportionately, so small that when he has seized an incident out of the cyclone of incidents that is going on around him he often finds that it is too small to make a showing with.

I went with Frederick Villiers, the oldest war correspondent alive, once an associate of Archibald Forbes, the father of war correspondents, to the British trenches near Plœgsteert one afternoon.

"Why in the devil do those German machine-guns keep banging away to-day? They hardly ever use machine-guns over there in the daytime. I don't like the looks of it." I heard a captain make this remark to the British officer who was acting as our escort.

"I'll have to get these two correspondents out of here if there's going to be any trouble,"

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said our guide. "Can't have them in a charge, you know."

English shells from guns some miles behind us sang over our heads and dropped on the German trench three hundred feet distant. Three times we saw shells fall directly on the German line. Blasts of material would mushroom into the air, and out of the blast we would see pieces of timber, parts of rifles, objects that looked gruesomely like human arms and legs, float to the earth, moving downward very slowly, as compared with their upward rush. We heard our British friends jubilate over the marksmanship of their distant artillery—and then our guide took us away to safety. Within a few minutes after we had left the trench and returned to the shelter of the grove the cry of "Ambulance!" came running along the trench and a sentry at the trench entrance shouted it into the Plœgsteert wood where the ambulance-men were stationed.

"Thirty-four Seaforths hit by a German shell," said the entrance sentry.

Villiers and I had missed it, for it was among the Seaforths that we had spent the afternoon.

And yet, when it came to writing the story of the afternoon's experience, the incident

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seemed hopelessly small as an illustration of the unpleasant side of war. It was too slight to be mentioned in the *communiqués* on either side. What are thirty-four dead men among thousands?

Passing along a country road in Galicia, near Przemyśl, I saw a score of Austrian soldiers lying on the ground in a farm-yard. It was the beauty of the picture that first attracted our attention. Through the bare branches of an apple-orchard the winter sunshine drifted down on to beds of golden straw which served as the background for the blue-gray Austrian uniform of the prostrate men. We learned that these men were dying of cholera; within twenty-four hours most of them would be dead and new victims would be in their places, for this orchard had been set aside as the spot to which every soldier on that part of the line who developed symptoms of cholera must be carried. Across the road, in a plowed field, farmer boys were digging a hole—it was their daily task—in which these men would be buried. Cholera was a sure and a quick death in Galicia in those days.

A military priest moved about in the mud of the orchard, and when he found men who were strong enough to rise to their knees he bent over

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toward them, as they did so, received their confession, and granted them extreme unction. There were no doctors for these men. The health of their bodies had gone forever; for the health of their souls the good priest put his own gentle life in jeopardy. I took photographs of the priest and of the men who were doomed to die; I took a photograph of the boys digging the big grave in the field across the way. I was beholding things at first hand, and my only excuse for using my camera on such a scene is that I wanted my readers also to see the horror of war as I had seen it there in the orchard.

And yet all the words that I could write of this small thing which I had seen, and all the photographs I might take, fell short of telling adequately the full horror which the cholera was working among thousands of lives, daily, in the Austrian and Russian lines. Again I had come up against the hard fact that the Great War is too big to be seen.

One reassuring fact for American newspaper readers is that, even if we correspondents do not know the latest news, they, the readers, will get it, anyhow.

For instance: It was a winter day at Przemyśl. New guns were booming to the north of us where

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Russian guns had never been before. The Austrian officer who had us in charge would not explain what the sound of the new guns meant. Instead he took us to the suburbs of Przemyśl, within the fortifications, and let us look at a church from which the spire had been blown away. All the story I found that day to write was about a fight between an owl that had been driven into the blinding daylight by having his home in the church steeple blown away, and six blackbirds who, perhaps, had never seen an owl. I called the story a battle of monoplanes and mailed it in the military post that night.

But that day, seventeen miles away, Jaroslav had fallen; that was what the new guns meant. Przemyśl was doomed. We did not know in Przemyśl what had happened, but that same evening in New York, and in every other city in the United States, Americans read in their evening papers the Russian *communiqué*, telling how the Russians had driven the Austrians out of Jaroslav and how the fall of Przemyśl was at hand. And yet two American war reporters in Przemyśl and all the millions of men and women in Austria and Germany did not know for several days that Przemyśl was doomed.

Again: We were riding in springless wagons

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in a blizzard in desolate northern Serbia in the winter of 1914-15.

"Never mind the inconvenience," said the Austrian officer who was our chaperon. "The Servians are flying before us. To-morrow Belgrade falls and I am informed that I am to take you to that city. There you shall have comfort and find plenty of news."

But on the morrow, when we arose from the pile of straw in the ramshackle schoolhouse where we had spent the night, and climbed into our bone-wracking wagons after enjoying a breakfast of goulash, the drivers turned their horses northward, toward the Save and Austria, not eastward toward the Danube and Belgrade. There was no explanation given to us. At last we passed out of Serbia into Hungary, and after some days we arrived in Budapest on a steam-train.

Why the change in plans? What had happened? We American war correspondents, on whom, as we felt, some millions of Americans were depending for their news, did not know. We could get no answers to our questions. But that night, while we were sleeping in the bleak schoolhouse some twenty miles behind the Austrian front, Americans, in their comfort-



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able homes, were reading in their evening newspapers that the Servians had come to life and were driving the Austrians out of Servia, in utter rout. Americans got the story from the Servian *communiqué*, but millions of Austrians and Germans did not know of the rout for many weeks. As for myself, a Hungarian journalist whispered the story to me in the Belvarosi Kavehaz in Budapest some days after the Austrian army and we two American war correspondents had reached safety, on the Hungarian side of the Danube.

“How much danger do you war correspondents get into?” is a question which every correspondent must face when he returns to the United States. This is our casualty list, up to the winter of 1915-16:

Dead: Henry Beach Needham, magazine writer; killed in fall of aeroplane, in suburbs of Paris.

Patrick L. Jones, International News; drowned in sinking of *Lusitania*.

Wounded: Walter C. Whiffen, Associated Press; struck in leg by shrapnel while on the Russian front.

This list tells its own story of the fact that so few of the men who are sending America



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its war news have been under fire in the field that only one of them has been hit. The British correspondents have taken up this question of who is a war correspondent and who isn't by applying this question as a test, "Have you ever had a gun fired at you in anger?" Little it boots an English correspondent to hang around headquarters in jaunty costume of the field. Sooner or later he must answer this question, put to him by the chaps who *have* had guns so directed at themselves, and if his answer is in the negative, he doesn't belong. Out of the comparatively large number of American correspondents who have been gathering war news in Europe I know perhaps twenty who would qualify as war correspondents under the test of the British journalists.

But the British journalists have not taken into account the large number of correspondents who have been in London during the Zeppelin raids and who have found themselves, together with some seven million other human beings, in as much danger from death by bombs and shells as any war correspondent that ever went on to a battle-field. Any American correspondent in London has won the right to say that he has been under fire.

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I have seen American correspondents under danger from shell- and rifle-fire a number of times. After the battle of Neuve-Chapelle a few correspondents, including Elser, of the Associated Press, and myself, were taken by the British to see the ruins of the town which they had just captured. In our party was Matania, an Italian sketch artist, whose work in the London illustrated weeklies has been considered the best that has appeared during the war. It was a cloudy day, and in the late afternoon a rainbow appeared over the shattered village, framing it like a proscenium arch—a stage setting. Matania, in hot enthusiasm, began to sketch the scene, when a three-inch shell whistled its way to a spot near by and burst. The explosion drenched the party in mud and half covered Matania's drawing.

With an Italian expletive the artist tore up the drawing and began violently to sketch the shell-burst as the fresh memory of it appeared in his mind's eye. A second and a third shell fell near the party, and the British officer ordered us to move on to another part of the line, as the Germans had undoubtedly found our range.

At dinner that night Matania, rumpling his

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hair with excited hands, suddenly shouted: "Fool that I am! Why didn't I save that mud-covered drawing and have it published to show how near I came to being killed to-day!"

Matania was merely expressing a feeling of elation and pride which all correspondents feel at having been under fire and at having escaped.

This is a feeling that is not confined to cub reporters in the war game. The old-timers, I find, have it also.

On a hill in Bulgaria a shell which the Bulgarians sent over into the British lines fell within forty feet of our party, which included Richard Harding Davis, James H. Hare, John McCutcheon, and John Bass, every one of whom had been under fire in other wars. That night, in talking over the events of the day, I found them all jubilant over the fact that they had been under fire; I had something of the same feeling, but, in a spirit of candor, I said:

"I don't like shell-fire." I wasn't lying, either.

Davis, with a contented smile, said: "Well, I've been a war correspondent long enough to have the right to say I like it. There's a thrill about it that's pleasant."

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Later, I heard him say of another shell: "Well, I'm glad that one didn't get me. This war game is too interesting. I don't want to have to go home in the fifth inning."

Rifle-fire leaves a different impression upon you. There is something impersonal about an exploding shell, but a rifle-bullet sent at you is all your own. The artillerymen who sent the shell were trying to kill anybody, but the rifleman who sent the bullet was trying to kill *you*.

Looking through a periscope from the British trenches in Belgium, I unwittingly disobeyed orders and moved the top of the periscope, which projected, of course, above the trench. Within a fraction of a second a bullet from the German trenches passed directly above my head. The impression that that bullet was mine, that somebody had tried to kill me, was as vivid as the joy that he had not succeeded. I went to sleep that night thinking about that one bullet, and it was on my mind in the morning.

Habit, apparently, accustoms the average human to all the dangers that war presents, which explains, perhaps, the fact that one day, coming to a gap in a British trench where it crossed the La Bassée road, I was casually or-

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dered by an officer, who had become habituated to death, to jump across in haste "because the Germans are always watching this spot." I made the twelve-foot jump in a hurry. Six others did the same, and a bullet came from the German rifles about a thousand feet away at each one of us.

Undoubtedly those eager German eyes across the way waited for more of us to jump. If they did they soon met a strange sight. They saw a large gentleman, dressed in golf costume, walk into the road from the direction we had come, take off his golf-cap, wipe the perspiration from his forehead—they might have heard him give a sigh of relief if their ears had ranged with their eyes—lean like an exhausted man against the pile of sandbags, which formed the entrance to the trench, and settle himself contentedly for a rest, within full view of the German trenches.

Their surprise and astonishment is recorded to this day in the living person of A. H. Griffith; his unriddled body is a testament to the fact that the Germans were too puzzled to shoot; that the view of a large plump man in No Man's Land, clad in golf costume, paralyzed their trigger fingers.

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Griffith, for many years private secretary to the late Lord Strathcona of Canada, had come to the front as a representative of the Canadian Government and had joined the small party of newspaper correspondents because it gave him an opportunity to get a view of trench life. Half a mile of walking with bended back in the trench had well-nigh exhausted him and caused him to drop behind. The gap in the trench he had taken as an indication of the absence of danger and as a fitting resting-place for a man whose back ached from stooping.

“Good God! Jump! Get out of there!” yelled an officer who came along the trench some minutes later. Griffith, it may be recorded, gathered from the officer’s words, without further explanation, that he ought to move, which he did.

I have always felt that the Germans across the way “played cricket,” as the English call it, that day. There must have been scores of them who had a chance to kill the man in the golf costume, but some Teutonic phrase ran along the line that gave him his life. He was too obviously not in the war game, but only an onlooker.

Ordinarily street clothes are, as a usual

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thing, however, highly dangerous as trench garb.

"I am not a war correspondent. I am a *littérateur* and I am going to the front merely to write what I see. I shall wear my ordinary clothes." So said a certain German writer who received word at his home one night that he would be taken with a party on a trip to the front the next day. His wife laid out his big muffler, his rubbers, umbrella, and overcoat, and the next morning, thus accoutred and wearing a derby hat, he went to the War Office and was taken to the front.

From the first appearance of the party in the battle zone they drew Russian fire. The derby hat of the German *littérateur* served as a moving target on which, throughout the day, the enemy directed his utmost efforts and skill. In the trenches the black archlike profile of the bowler hat skirted the trench-top and drew from time to time a rattle of Russian rifle-fire. The man in the derby hat became an Ishmaelite, a pariah, shunned by all, and that night the military authorities tucked him into an automobile, derby, muffler, rubbers, umbrella, and all, and sent him back home.

"No one knows how many Germans have



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been killed to-day by fire drawn by that black costume," said an officer. "Any time the enemy sees a man dressed like a civilian it judges that he is some statesman who ought to be put out of the way."

I confess that once I joined in the common popular ribaldry over war correspondents' clothes. But I must admit that, to-day, in my trunks I have five different sets of such garments, not including my afternoon garb and my evening clothes. They are of different colors to suit my work at the British, French, Austrian, Italian, and Servian army headquarters.

Before a correspondent goes to the front he is told what clothes to secure. The Ally armies are not particular as to the exact cut of the war correspondent's garb, but the Germans have devised an official uniform for war correspondents, with the assistance of the correspondents themselves.

The popular idea of how much roughing it a correspondent must undergo in the present war is considerably exaggerated. There have been times, of course, when correspondents were forced to take soldier's fare and live the soldier's life, but such occasions have been few.



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Not since the days of the Japanese-Russian War have war correspondents lived in tents, bathed in canvas bathtubs, had their retinues of servants and couriers, chartered despatch-boats, bought horses, and otherwise dissipated the funds of their helpless employers and lived up to the popular idea of what a war correspondent ought to be and do. All the wars, since the conflict in Manchuria—with the exception of the mild Villa campaign and the inconsequential Pershing expedition—have been fought in the populous places of the earth. There have been short stretches of time in the Great War when certain clusters of correspondents lived in freight-cars, or passenger-cars, but these have been rare. I slept in forty different beds in Belgium, France, Switzerland, Germany, Austria, and Galicia in a total of sixty consecutive nights, and not one bed was a poor one.

The only real, honest-to-goodness valet that has ever brightened my life and taken care of my clothes was a man-servant, in soldier's clothes, who was assigned to me while I was at the British front. I think it hurt Fred to discover that I had not brought enough underwear with me to wear a new layout every day,

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but I had come "traveling light," prepared for war. Every morning at seven o'clock—I insisted on rising at a most plebeian hour—he would tiptoe into the room in the little French hotel, light my oil-lamp, untangle my underwear, fold it carefully on a chair, with the shirt on top (I was glad in those days that I did not wear combination underwear. An English valet never serves an Englishman who wears combination suits, for the simple reason that no Englishman ever does), shake out my socks, turn them inside out, and arrange them, as mother used to do on darning-days, with the toe folded in so that I could peel them on. I would find my shoes and leggings cleaned of all of yesterday's mud and polished to a fault.

This could hardly be called "roughing it," though I have given it as an instance of luxury in the extreme. I have dined with officers at the front, in a French château, within sound of infantry fire, who were served, by waiters from Paris, a dinner prepared by a chef from the Café de Paris. And I have had dinner with a Servian general when our table was a bale of hay and our food a piece of cheese, a chunk of bread, and a bottle of strong Servian wine.

The cost of keeping a correspondent in the

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field in the Great War varies in accordance with the territory. In Galicia, where "roughing it" extended to sleeping in box-cars and eating what could be found in the small villages, my expense account shows that twenty dollars a week kept me going.

But in Salonica, where British officers abounded, and entertainment and hospitality were the pleasant order, my receipts from the home office, which did not include salary, ran like this:

November	5, 1915	.....	\$500.00
December	6, 1915	.....	300.00
December	24, 1915	.....	300.00
January	8, 1916	.....	500.00
February	16, 1916	.....	500.00

And there were four other American correspondents who were finding Salonica as expensive as I did. Adding our expenses, it may be gathered that the occasional little items and even more occasional feature stories which were sent from Salonica for the casual perusal of American newspaper readers were costly bits for the newspapers when salaries and cable tolls are appended. And Salonica was only one corner of many which were being "covered" by the American news agencies and newspapers.

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From the very first, the American newspaper correspondents have had the inside track in Europe. This was so markedly true that during the first year of the war the British public received its important news from American newspaper correspondents. For some reason or other, known to British journalists alone, American correspondents were given the best chances at the war news, and the great newspapers of London printed stories by American correspondents until some of these correspondents became better known to the British public than they were to their own countrymen back in the United States. The British censors permitted American correspondents to write and send to the United States stories of news events which the British journalists were not allowed even to submit to the censor. Therefore, if a British newspaper could secure from an American correspondent a story which British journalists did not even attempt to delve into, it did so with avidity. It was unfair to the British journalist, I confess.

I happened to be the American correspondent on whom the fortune fell of being the only correspondent of any nationality for some weeks at the British front. My stories were carried

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to London by the king's messenger every morning at seven o'clock, were cabled to the United States, and then, after my London office was assured that the stories had reached America, they were turned over to a British news agency which distributed them throughout the British Isles and sent them to India and Australia. Why such an arrangement was ever made I have never been able to comprehend. It grew out of British politics that were too deep for me. But the point is that Americans were getting the news first.

Will Irwin, the American writer, came to London six months after the war began and discovered that the English people did not know—actually were in total ignorance of the fact—that there ever had been such a thing as the battle of Ypres in October of 1914. Lord Northcliffe, the king of British publishers, with almost unlimited influence in British affairs, knew of the battle, as did all the other publishers of England, but, for some mysterious reason working in British affairs, they did not publish the story. Irwin got the story and sent it to the *New York Tribune*. Within a week Irwin became the most famous journalist in England. His picture was published in the

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British newspapers, together with his story of the battle of Ypres. The story was published in pamphlet form and sold on the news-stands through the British Isles. But the American public took the story as a commonplace, quite in line with their habit of receiving the best war news first.

I cannot say that America is getting all the news of the Great War. The iron hand of the censor is on the news. How extensive this censorship is, its nature, and how, at times, it has broken down or has been evaded by American correspondents is another story.

THE FREE-LANCE AND THE FAKER





## THE FREE-LANCE AND THE FAKER

THERE have been three stages in war correspondents' activities in the Great War. Every one of them might have been noticed by the careful newspaper reader if he had read between the lines of the war despatches.

The first stage may be known as the "free-lance days." The public, news-hungry, was often misled in that period. In the mass of war news, no small amount of fake and lies was fed to it by unscrupulous adventurers who were not trained correspondents and who had no reputation for veracity to sustain.

The second stage is called by European war correspondents the "dark ages." The public suffered in this stage, too, because, though it got fewer fakes and fewer unreliable stories, it got no other news of any sort, except the official reports; and these it had learned to take with a grain of salt.

The third stage, the one we have entered only

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recently, is the stage of the new twentieth-century war correspondent.

The harum-scarumness of those early free-lance days is almost unbelievable, as one looks back on it now. Every word that a correspondent wrote for the news-hungry public was pure gold. Never, in the modern world, did news count for so much in the lives of so many millions of people as it did during those first months of the Great War. Not a word that a correspondent wrote in those days was overlooked by the news-seeking millions. News, lies, local color, human interest, fakes, all went down the great public gullet in Gargantuan gulps.

Because the war began in Belgium, the experiences of the war correspondent began there also. The first real war news and the first real war fakes came from there.

Who "saved" the American consulate at Antwerp when the Germans seized the town? American correspondents in Europe are still debating this question, and the lie has been passed more than once in the discussion, because three different sets of correspondents claim the distinction.

It was like this: As the Germans approached

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Antwerp many sagacious humans fled the town, among them some of the consulate employees and officials. Shells were falling on the city, and those of the correspondents who were not joining in the retreat were hiding in cellars.

After the shell-fire had ceased, some of the American correspondents who came out of hiding — and, be it understood, they cannot be blamed for having hid—made their way to the consulate, and, finding no one there, proceeded to “save” it from some imaginary danger that has not yet been made clear.

Who did the “saving”? That’s the question. Americans have read at least three different thrilling stories of the incident. The consulate stood on a little side street, two doors off the main street, but there was a jog in the latter which made it possible to obtain a view of the main street for a distance of about two blocks. Was the “rescuer” a moving-picture man who hurried to the consulate when he saw the Germans were marching into the town, placed his camera in one of the windows, and, under the shelter of the American flag and a window-curtain, photographed the lines of incoming conquerors, not knowing that he was the only human being in the house?

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Or was it a correspondent from a small newspaper who, entering the place and finding it empty, sat down at the consul's desk and wrote a story about how he had taken charge of the deserted American consulate? Is it true that this correspondent made two copies of the story, left one by accident on a table, and thus played into the hands of a third correspondent who found it and wired it to his own newspaper as his own experience?

None of us war correspondents knows the truth.

Those were the good old days in the Great War, those days when war correspondents, unbidden, unwelcome, deluged Belgium and the northern part of France. They were the free-and-easy days when, if a man were a faker at heart, he could fake to his heart's content, with no one to deny his stories, no one to question his alibis.

Adventurers rushed from the United States at the outbreak of war, usually traveling on their own money, carrying credentials from some newspaper that was only too glad to have a correspondent in Europe at no expense to itself. With such credentials these same adventurers saved themselves from capture now and then,

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and between times made themselves heroes at home by faking stories of their own valiant deeds and great dangers.

The American public read a mass of rot in those days in its daily allotment of war news. It did not know the difference between the truth and the lie; neither did the editors. While the scandal of faking was hot among us, and while we were bandying about the legend, "War is the faker's opportunity," the fakers were lying shamelessly to the American public about battles they had never seen, battles that had never occurred, about deeds that they had never performed.

These fakes were intended, in the main, to impress readers with the writer's prowess and bravery. One result is that several names of American newspaper writers which are synonymous with heroism in the mind of newspaper readers are synonymous with faking in the knowledge of other newspaper writers. Their fakery, in the main, was not injurious, but there have been instances where their work has produced serious results—especially in their reports of German atrocities in Belgium. For the supreme news-cheating of all the war was done in Belgium.

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Let me say, right here, in view of what I shall say next, that my sympathies are strongly pro-Ally. I have been with armies on both sides in the Great War. I have been in all the warring countries, except Rumania and Russia, and after all that I have seen and heard and learned, my once neutral mind has settled itself into the Ally groove. I am convinced that humanity will gain more from an Allied victory than from German success. Yet, in spite of this I am bound to say, knowing what I do of the business of war news, that every American who has based his ideas of German atrocities in Belgium on newspaper reports of the early, free-lance days, is carrying a vast amount of misinformation in his head.

I was in Belgium when the first atrocity stories went out. I hunted and hunted for atrocities during the first days of the atrocity scare. I couldn't find atrocities. I couldn't find people who had seen them. I traveled on trains with Belgians who had fled from the German lines and I spent much time among Belgian refugees. I offered sums of money for photographs of children whose hands had been cut off or who had been wounded or injured in other ways.

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*I never found a first-hand Belgian atrocity story; and when I ran down the second-hand stories they all petered out.*

Yet in those days there were newspaper men around me, spending their time as I spent mine, living in the same hotel with me, eating at the same cafés and often at the same table, making the same news rounds that I made, who were sending their daily budget of atrocity stories back to the United States. I am only telling the truth when I say that the first Belgian atrocity stories to reach the United States from Belgium were those of certain correspondents whose reputations among American newspaper men are those of arch-fakers, and who, since the early days in Belgium, have lied about so many other things that they have since become discredited in newspaper circles.

“I attended the funeral, yesterday afternoon, of a hand,” said one of those correspondents importantly as he seated himself at my table one noon in the Hotel St. Antoine in Antwerp. “It was the hand of an old man, and it had been cut off by a German soldier. I’ll bet I make the front pages of the New York papers this morning with my story.”

I don’t know whether he did or not, but I



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do know that, at the very time when he was supposed to have been at this grotesque funeral, he was playing billiards in a café.

These correspondents witnessed no more horrors than I did during the time that I was in Belgium, yet they never withheld details of horrors. Stories of old men being shot; of children putting forth their hands to have them cut off by German sabers; of women with children being bayoneted, flew from their typewriters with astonishing rapidity as soon as they discovered that such stories were proving of interest to American newspaper readers.

In all fairness to the great news-gathering agencies of the United States, the Associated Press, the United Press, the International News, and the smaller agencies on which so many American newspapers have depended for their news during the war, I must say that they are to be exonerated of faking in this serious matter of the Belgian atrocities.

I should add that I have no reason to question the word of men of high standing who have reported the commission of frightful deeds in Belgium. I can only tell of what is compassed by my own experience.

The lesser faking to which American readers



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were sometimes subjected in the early days was not unentertaining.

A certain little circle of fakers — pariahs among the responsible correspondents—included one man who wrote that he had been arrested as a spy by the French on the outskirts of a village, handcuffed to German prisoners, and led into the village, with a French crowd trying to get at him with their knives. He did not know, when he wrote the story, that certain American correspondents were also under arrest in the village at the same time and saw him, under arrest, escorted gently by a French officer to the outskirts of the town, where he mounted a bicycle and rode away without molestation.

“I was riding on a train near Paris,” ran the story of one man who faked a whole battle in France, “when we suddenly heard shooting. The train stopped and we got off, and, looking over a hill, we saw a battle in full swing. As I looked, I saw one soldier jab another through the head with his bayonet.”

His story, coming early in the war as the first eye-witness story of a battle, received flattering attention and huge headlines. But he was later recalled because of his unreliability.

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"I was at the front last night," said one of these faking correspondents to me, one morning in Paris—the war had been on only three weeks and I was interested. "Yes, I was sitting here in the hotel lobby when a man in uniform came up to me and said, 'Come on, Mr. Newspaper Man, and I'll give you a ride.' We got into his car, and rode for about three hours. Then he took me into a ditch where a lot of bullets were flying and we had a fine view of the battle."

To my certain knowledge, this young man had not left his room at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Paris that night, and yet some weeks later I came across an astonishingly interesting story, which appeared in two hundred and fifty or more American newspapers, of how this youth had spent that night on a battle-field.

American correspondents, however, were not the only offenders in the matter of faking.

The British correspondents had more to fear from the enemy than did the American writers, though most of them, with extraordinary bravery and coolness, remained to the last with American correspondents in the threatened towns of Belgium and northern France. A few beat retreats that were too hasty and so got

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out of touch with the news centers. It then seemed advisable to some of them to draw on their imaginations for their news.

One British correspondent, favorably known for his conduct in other wars, stationed himself at Ostend, far out of the danger zone, and sent from there such exciting stories of the proximity of the Germans and the danger of capture he himself was running that, by some process of psychology, the danger which he was imagining became very real to him. One day he took a boat and retreated to London, appearing in the editor's office in a state of "blue funk," with the story that he had remained in the Belgian town as long as it was safe to do so.

His story was published with a great flourish, making it appear that the noted correspondent was the last to leave the scene of the German advance. But for many days the correspondents of London newspapers remained in Ostend, and their daily stories sent from the town whence the famous war correspondent had fled soon branded him a victim of his own imaginative yarns.

But if those early days of the war made faking easy, they were, nevertheless, happy times, too, for the honest news-getter. We

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could get around in those days when we were regarded as "nothing more than civilians."

I heard that expression first on the same day that I heard the first shot in the Great War. That shot was fired under the window of my room in the Hotel St. Antoine at Antwerp, at 2.30 A. M., September 2, 1914. As I looked out of the window into the pitch-black streets, twenty more shots followed, and I heard distant cannon. I went to the bathroom and got a drink of water. I remember looking at the cast-iron bathtub and wondering whether bullets would pass through its sides. By the time I got to the window again forty thousand Belgian rifles and some hundreds of Belgian machine-guns, together with some scores of Belgian artillery pieces, were all booming away with high frequency. The flashes all pointed upward into the sky.

I was seeing the first armed resistance against a Zeppelin. I saw the sparks on the bombs which the Zeppelin was dropping; I saw the bombs whirl through the air in mad circles; and I heard the terrific explosions. I knew that I had come across a great newspaper story. I got into my clothes and dashed down the stairs to the front door.



"NEWSPAPER MEN ARE ONLY CIVILIANS TO ME"



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A soldier stood there. "You can't pass out," he said, "You'll be killed."

"Never mind that part of it," I said. "I'm a newspaper man and I've got business out there."

"Newspaper men are only civilians to me," said the soldier. "You can't go out."

Of course, that Belgian soldier, and all the other soldiers I met who regarded newspaper men as he did, were wrong. The difference between a civilian and a newspaper man, that morning in the hotel lobby at Antwerp, was that the civilians remained in the lobby, while the newspaper man sneaked out through the kitchen, found a door into an alley, and made his way to the street to see what was going on.

After an hour the firing ceased. Daylight came, and as soon as the telegraph-office was opened I went there to wire my story to London—a story of the first battle against a Zeppelin.

There was a soldier at the entrance to the telegraph-office who would not permit me to enter. I proved to him and to his superiors that I was a newspaper correspondent.

"Newspaper correspondents are only civilians to me," was their answer. "And what's more,



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even if you did give your story to the censor, he wouldn't send it."

Nevertheless, the story was printed that night in New York and many other American cities. I found a man who was going to Ostend in an automobile. He carried my copy to the telegraph-office in that town, and had no difficulty in getting the officials to send it.

The Belgian system had thus broken down twice within a few hours in its attempt to carry out the military theory that there was no such animal as a newspaper correspondent. This was the theory that was generally held in all the armies of Europe at the outset of the war. It was a theory that made possible the existence of the free-lance reporter, whether he was an honest and reliable news-getter or a conscienceless faker.

Of course, we played tricks in those days, I confess; we outwitted censors; we went where we were not wanted, and, if we were caught, we suffered for it.

There is a little dining-room in the railroad station at Calais which was used by more than one American war correspondent to outwit both the French and the Belgian War offices in the first winter of the war. More than one



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American correspondent has sat in that station buffet forcing himself to swallow food he did not want, trembling in his shoes lest some French or Belgian officer should challenge his right to be there, while he played the famous trick of "Going to Dunkirk."

The correspondents always felt justified in working the "Going to Dunkirk" trick, because they believed that, in doing so, they were only beating the Belgian War Office at its own game. The Belgians, after the fall of Antwerp, would never refuse an American correspondent a pass to their lines beyond Dunkirk; their desire to please American correspondents was always apparent. But, to reach the Belgian lines, it was necessary to pass through the French lines at Calais, and the French invariably refused to permit correspondents to do this. The correspondents could not disabuse their minds of the impression that the French refusal was made with the approval of the Belgians. Wherefore, they set out to beat the game as best they could. The dining-room trick did it.

It went like this:

The Calais railroad station was closely guarded by the French. If you wanted to leave Calais by train you were forced to go to the

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military authorities for passes which would permit you to enter the railroad station. Once inside the station, however, you might buy a railroad ticket for any point; your very presence in the station guaranteed that the French military authorities in the town of Calais had investigated you and granted you permission to travel.

But there were other ways of entering the Calais railroad station besides passing the sentry at the door with your military *laissez-passer*. We American correspondents discovered that by taking a train at Paris and alighting in the Calais railroad station, which was at the end of the Paris-Calais line, we could escape all challenges by sentries, if we only lay low and made ourselves inconspicuous. There was an evening train for Dunkirk, and, once you were in the Calais railroad station, you had only to buy a ticket for Dunkirk and wait until the train departed.

The little dining-room was the hiding-place. Upon alighting from the train from Paris you would ask a porter to carry your baggage into the dining-room, which opened directly on to the station platform. There you would go through the form of eating until within a few

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minutes of train-time. Then, leaving your baggage in the dining-room, you would saunter out to the ticket-office, purchase your ticket with as little fuss as possible, saunter back to the dining-room, call a porter, and go out to the train through the dining-room door.

Two hours later you would be in Dunkirk, carrying your Belgian pass, which the Belgians could not well refuse to honor.

We all knew that the time would come when one of us would be caught at the buffet trick and that correspondent who was caught would wish he had stayed in Paris. But the newspaper stories which we got along the Belgian front were too precious to lose. No American newspaper correspondent was ever caught at the game of "Going to Dunkirk." It fell, instead, to the lot of an Englishman, Lucien Jones, a son of Henry Arthur Jones, the playwright, representative of the *London Chronicle*. Jones went to Dunkirk three times in succession, after the Belgians had twice expelled him, and his persistent reappearances caused the military officials to seek out the hole in their military system whereby the correspondents were leaking into their lines.

Into jail he went; it was only through the

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efforts of the British Foreign Office and the prominence of his father that he secured his release. The military authorities were so angry at him that when I tried to send him a cheese from my hotel in Dunkirk, where I was held awaiting exportation, they refused to let him have it.

And who tipped off the trick to the authorities? A newspaper man who, when a colleague in kindness told him how he could get to Dunkirk by using the Calais dining-room as a hiding-place, sat down in his hotel in Paris and wrote a story saying that he *had* got to Dunkirk and the Belgian front, and telling how he had done it. It was a lie that put Jones into jail for three weeks and ended our trips to Dunkirk, where the news-picking was always good.

There were two rumored punishments for war correspondents who got to the front without passes in those days. One was death by shooting; the other, imprisonment in a fortress for the length of the war. In those old days when we were considered mere civilians with no rights that any one was bound to respect, we used often to talk of those mythical punishments; but to this day I have never heard of any correspondent's suffering either penalty.

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We are tagged and listed now in little black books that can be found at any frontier or in any army headquarters, but in those happy-go-lucky early days of the war the armies had not learned how to control us. The great machinery of that cyclonic blast of war that hit the civilized world of 1914 left newspaper correspondents entirely out of its operations. It ignored them, and therefore it had no way of dealing with them. We puzzled the generals. The rules said, "No newspaper correspondents allowed." But there were always American newspaper correspondents around somewhere.

The weather-man might as well make a rule that there shall be no rain in April.

The Germans began the war with a rule against correspondents, but when they got to Brussels they found a nest of American correspondents awaiting them. In their forward rush they overtook John McCutcheon, Irvin S. Cobb, and others. The late Richard Harding Davis marched alongside the German hordes that were advancing on Paris. The English rules were as strict as the German; but American correspondents were in the retreat from Mons, and all the regulations of General French's army as to the disposal of off-side

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war correspondents broke down. The army men were too busy retreating to worry about punishing a poor war correspondent who was trying as hard to get away as they were.

I have a crumpled piece of paper, among my souvenirs, which took me to Soissons; incidentally, it puzzled, beyond *méasure*, a whole townful of British and French officers. The mayor of Crépy-en-Valois gave it to me; it set forth that I was to be permitted to pass along the road to Soissons. The truth was that the mayor had no right to give me such a pass; but he didn't know it and I didn't know it, though I did suspect, at the time, that the pass might be questioned. All the soldiers I met along the road were men who had been soldiers only a few weeks and to whom a paper signed by a mayor carried as much weight as a paper signed by a general. They were better acquainted with mayors than with generals, in fact, and wherever I presented this bit of paper I was welcomed with a smile and permitted to pass.

That piece of paper symbolizes as deep pleasure as I have ever had in my life. It threw open to me the beautiful tree-fringed roads. It was autumn; the days were golden and a

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full moon lighted the nights; the biggest war in the world was on; and I, with this magic piece of paper, was free to go as I could among the French and British armies, so long as I seemed to be heading for Soissons. This thrill lasted two days until a British officer, who couldn't read French and who had no respect for bits of paper signed by French mayors, took the pass from me and placed me under arrest.

"You've no right running around with a piece of paper like that," he said. "It's absolutely no good. You'll have to stay in this little town until I wire to headquarters to find out what to do with you." And thereby the colonel—one of the most gracious men I met in the war—let himself in for a world of trouble. He conferred with French and British officers in the town. On their advice he telegraphed to General French's headquarters that he had arrested a correspondent without military passes; he wanted to know what to do with him.

Every day for six days I went to the colonel's office to learn my fate. On the sixth day he said: "Well, I'll have to let you go. They're too damn busy fighting to answer my telegram. But I do know," he added, "that they won't



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want you here seeing everything that's going on."

And along the tree-fringed roads I returned to Paris. After that, whenever the colonel, who was an intelligent officer, had an arrested correspondent brought into his presence, he merely shipped him back to Paris, with a scolding.

That was two and a half years ago. What would happen to a correspondent to-day if he were to attempt to reach a forbidden position without passes?

It is terrible to contemplate. He would be taken back to London or Paris or Berlin or Vienna and turned loose there. But his name would go down in the correspondents' black book. Soon would come the day when Monsieur Ponsot of the French Foreign Office, or Mr. Montgomery of the British Foreign Office, Mr. Zimmermann of the German Foreign Office, or Count Montlong in Vienna, would be arranging a trip of correspondents to the front. Our hero would appear at the Foreign Office and request that his name be put on the list. He would be met, smilingly, perhaps, but *he wouldn't take the trip*. Days would pass and weeks and months without summons to the



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frontward expeditions, and then the truth would dawn upon him that his name was in the black books, and that never again in the Great War would he be permitted to see the front.

And when he started to return, he would discover, at every frontier, that his name was in the little black book which the spy-catchers at every frontier have in their possession, and that they had received orders to permit him to move in only one direction, said direction being toward the United States.

I have so far told of the conditions governing war writing only on the Ally side. But on the German side the same happy-go-lucky system of war corresponding was under way. John McCutcheon, Irvin S. Cobb, and several other American writers left Brussels and went forward to meet the oncoming Germans. For over a week they were traveling in the "No Man's Land" between the two armies, not knowing whether they were the tail end of the British retreat or the advance-guard of the German rush. The Germans decided it by catching up to them and arresting them.

While these American correspondents were watching the German advance Robert Dunn, of

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the New York *Evening Post*, and other correspondents, were in the British rout, and between the stories which have been written by both sets of correspondents the American public learned first-hand of what happened, during those stirring days, on both sides. Which is more, thanks to the censorship, than the public of any of the warring countries has learned to this day.

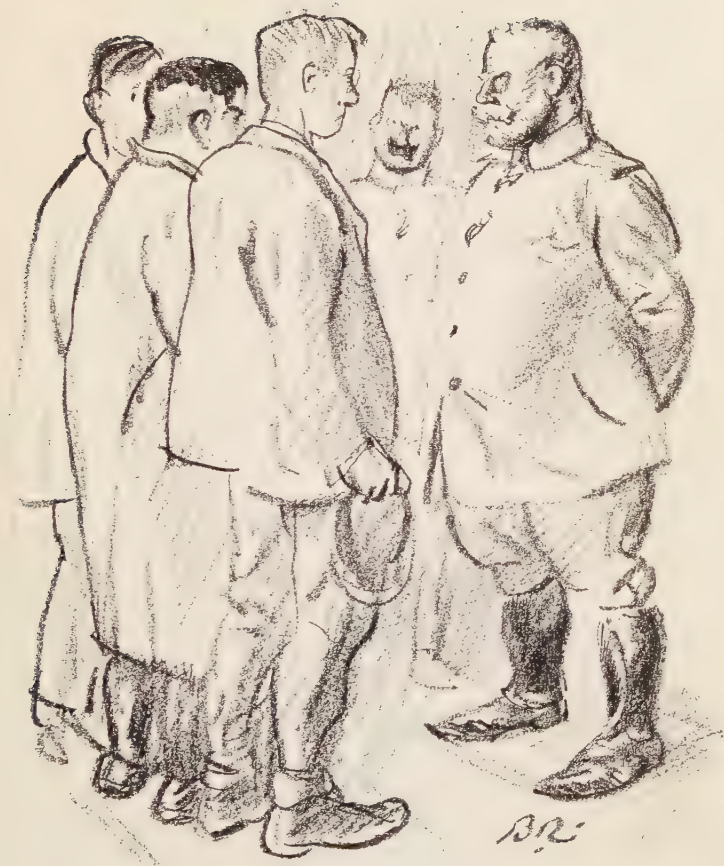
The Germans, too, were puzzled by the presence of war correspondents in their midst.

"There are no war correspondents with the German army," a certain general declared to the culprits who were brought before him.

"Beg pardon, General," said Cobb, "there are three of us."

Within a few weeks these same correspondents had been recognized by the War Office at Berlin and were permitted to visit various scenes of German triumph.

These happy days of free-lancing never existed in Austria. American correspondents who went there found conditions far different from what they were in other parts of the war zone. From the very first day of the war, the correspondents in that country—German, Austrian, and neutral—were recognized by the Govern-



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ment. In fact, the war started off with a boom for war correspondents in the Dual Monarchy. One hundred and eighteen writers were accredited to the army. They included Germans, Austrians, Swiss, Swedes, Danes, and Americans.

They purchased, under army instructions, horses, saddles, costumes, and firearms, and were established in a *Kriegspresse-Quartier* in a little town some ninety miles behind the front, under Colonel John, curator of the war museum in Vienna. They lived like lords and officers in those days. While their brother correspondents were scouting around France and Belgium, free-lancing, feeding themselves, and sleeping where they could, these writers in the Austrian press headquarters were enjoying a course of study and practice in what might have been termed a "war correspondents' school." Every morning they got on their horses and rode in a circle, riding-school fashion, around a riding-instructor. Later in the day they filled a near-by forest with the sounds of revolver practice. Their food was given to them, free—splendid Hungarian wines included—in a great mess-hall; and every man got tobacco and cigarettes as part of his rations.

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In fact, these men got everything they wanted—except news.

While the correspondents in Austria, with all their luxuries, were looking forward, with little hope, to the time when they might get to the front, the uncredentialed reporters on the Ally side were seeing all that was to be seen.

But the war correspondent's game was changing on both sides. The Austrian correspondents soon lost their horses, which were commandeered for the army. Their revolvers proved useless for anything but shooting at trees. They passed miserable hours in waiting for promised trips to the front which did not materialize. When I reached the Austrian press headquarters in October of 1914, after the fall of Antwerp, I found the writers there a discontented and altogether miserable lot.

It was the fall of Antwerp that ended the happy, free-lancing days on the Ally side. An old-time war correspondent remarked, with a sigh, as he crossed the Scheldt River and departed from Antwerp in the retreat: "Antwerp has fallen. Thank God, the day of the free-lance faker has passed!"

And then came what the war correspondents call the "dark ages," when the war offices came

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to look on correspondents not as unclassified civilians, but as pests who must be kept down. Oh, the dark, hopeless days that we spent waiting in the capitals, helpless, unable to move. In London there were at least thirty war writers practically prisoners. We could not move from London. There were orders against us; the French were instructed to "pick up" certain of us who tried to cross the Channel to France. The little black books were coming into being; the spring of 1915 saw their birth. You might have gone into the American bar at the Savoy Hotel in London, any evening at five o'clock in those days, and seen from a dozen to a score of famous war writers who were marooned in the British capital.

Paris, in those "dark ages," was as desolate as London. I found the correspondents there in the spring of 1915 almost desperate from inaction. Henry's bar was their meeting-place, and there they exchanged their tales of woes. The War Office would not recognize them; they had been informed that any individual attempts on their part to get to the front by stealth or sneaking would be severely punished. One or two brave spirits who risked it were prevented from sending any news of any sort—even the

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daily *communiqué*—to their papers for the space of ten days. Richard Harding Davis, Phil Simms, Charles Wythe Williams, Henry Beach Needham—all were at one time or another silenced by such punishment.

I was a wanderer during those “dark ages.” I hurried to Rome, hoping that perhaps the Italians had not heard of the newest wrinkle in War Office procedure regarding correspondents. It looked bright in Italy for a little while. I got on a train and went, with difficulty, to Udine, the Italian headquarters. It was a big moment when I got off the train in that headquarters town. While all the correspondents in London were longing vainly to get to the British headquarters, and all the correspondents in Paris yearning hopelessly to get to where General Joffre held forth—by blindly traveling I had taken a chance and had reached the town from which General Cadorna conducted the campaign of the Italian army. I got all the thrill of the old free-lance days in Belgium and France when the open road stretched before any fellow who had the nerve to take it. Again I was to tramp over fields and farms, sleep and eat as I could, and write stories of war at first-hand.



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That was a glorious evening in Udine; the star of hope was brighter than any of the other lights in the soft Indian sky that gleamed above us as we dined in the garden of the quaint old Italian inn. And what a dreamless, happy sleep that night!

Breakfast started off gloriously, because after breakfast I was going to begin to see things.

"Signor Shepherd?"

I looked up and beheld a detective. He didn't need a star to identify him. He had the curling mustache, the thick-soled shoes, the turtle forehead, and the stump of a cigar which all detectives possess.

"I'm him," I said, not wasting good grammar.

"You may finish your breakfast. I will wait for you."

All the gentlemen I met within the next sixty minutes were kind but firm in their declaration that I could not remain in Udine. The detectives even permitted me to go directly to General Cadorna's headquarters, where an Italian count, disguised as a soldier, received me most graciously and said:

"Well, you may remain in Udine if you wish to; but if you do, we'll be forced to shoot you."

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Two hours later, because a train didn't leave sooner, I departed from Udine—having been escorted to the train by a detective—and returned to Rome. The “dark ages” were on in Italy, too. I was permitted, months later, to see something of the Italian fighting, but that was after I had become a decent, credentialed war reporter.

The “dark ages” were on in every warring country in Europe. In Petrograd, Stanley Washburn, John Bass, Walter Whiffen, and other American correspondents sat about the hotels of the Russian capital or shared the hospitality of Ray Baker at the American Embassy. In Austria the correspondents had been moved from Alt-Sandec, a town near the Austrian headquarters, to a little village in the very center of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, where they got less news than the newspaper readers in Budapest.

American newspaper readers got little news in those days from their correspondents in any part of the war zone. The fakers had nothing to fake about and the writers nothing to write.

It was a light that dawned in Germany, spreading through the war offices of Europe, which finally dispelled the gloom of the “dark

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ages." The British kept their first battle of Ypres a secret from the world for four months. But the Germans were guilty of a stupidity almost as great, for von Hindenburg's first defeat of the Russian army in the Mazurian Lake region did not reach the world until Karl von Wiegand, then of the United Press, discovered the battle as a news story, and persuaded the German War Office to let him go to Eastern Prussia and make a news story out of the victory.

That one story served to prove to the Germans the value of proper publicity. Within a short time they had appointed a man in the War Office whose sole duty was to arrange for trips for war correspondents to the various fronts.

The Allies soon felt the force of this German move. While desperate correspondents on the Ally side were either sending out fake and imaginative stories, or were passing their days in idleness in the Ally capitals, the correspondents in Germany were glorifying German arms by their stories of German doings. To offset the German propaganda, the Allies began to grant certain privileges to correspondents, and these privileges exist to-day.

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With the memories of the good old days behind them, and with the "dark ages" only recently passed, the war correspondents in Europe to-day have moved into the third era of their existence, the era of the twentieth-century war correspondent.

The like of the twentieth-century war correspondent has never been seen before. He is a patented war correspondent. You find him on both sides. He had been tested in a hundred ways as to his dependability and his sympathies. He is tabulated on the military records. His headquarters are always in some European capital, and he makes it a point to keep in daily touch with the War Office. He visits these offices regularly, like a police reporter or a city-hall reporter doing his daily rounds. Once in a while he is told that he may pack up his field kit and take a trip to the front. With a few other correspondents, on a certain day, he will make a tour of certain interesting places, after which he returns to the capital, writes a story of what he has seen, and then goes back to his daily grind of office-visiting.

Most of the faking of old days is gone. The free-lance adventurer who used to write his entertaining fakes has dropped out of the game;

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though harmless fakes, intended merely to glorify the writer while not misleading the public on an important matter, even now find their way into print occasionally. Such a story was that of the correspondent who, after being presented to President Poincaré of France, with a number of other correspondents—a purely formal proceeding—wrote that “the President of France, learning that I was with a party of correspondents, sent a courier across the fields to ask me to come to meet him. He thanked me for all I had written in support of the Ally cause.”

President Poincaré speaks no English, and this particular correspondent speaks no French; and what really occurred was that, as the line of correspondents passed the French President, this one, coming to his turn, offered his hand, smiled—and passed on down the line.

The new twentieth-century war correspondent knows a great deal about war, in spite of the restraints put upon him. He is under fire, oftentimes, and he has a grasp of the technical side of war. He writes only about what he has actually seen or what comes to him from official sources, and his stories are strictly censored.

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The day of the faker has passed. While it is true that the American public is not getting the whole truth from its correspondents on either side, owing to the censorship, nevertheless the average newspaper and magazine reader may rest assured that he is getting few lies. The reporters who are on the job in these days of restrained twentieth-century war correspondents are men who must do their work as Richard Harding Davis did his.

"If you read a story by Davis," said Frederick Palmer to me one day recently, "about a little yellow dog in some out-of-the-way village you could be sure, not only that Davis had really been in that village, but that he had really seen the yellow dog."

The Richard Harding Davis standard of truth is the standard of all the men I know in Europe who to-day are sending America its war news.

# THE PSYCHOLOGY OF RETREATS





## THE PSYCHOLOGY OF RETREATS

“’**T**AIN’T no disgrace to run when you are scared,” is a sentiment, expressed by one of our famous colored songsters, that found a considerable and affirmative response around parlor pianos some years ago.

But to run and not be scared—there’s an achievement that has taxed the most brilliant generals in the war in Europe. It is only by personally influencing his own troops that a general can keep them from being frightened in a retreat. No general can logically say to his soldiers, “You fellows will have to run, but don’t get excited; there’s no danger.” They will believe either one of these statements made singly, but the two do not go together.

I have been in the ruck of four retreats in the Great War. It happens that two of them which partook of the nature of routs were Austrian, while the two which were more orderly were accomplished by Ally forces.

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In the Austrian retreats, the generals waited too long; they permitted the danger to become so apparent that the stupidest soldier in the army could not be persuaded that it was not time for him to get away from where he was. In the Ally retreats I mingled with soldiers who either did not know they were retreating, or who objected to being called away from their guns and trenches, not recognizing danger in the death that confronted them.

Every soldier, every railroad-man, every artilleryman, every wagon-driver in the great retreat of the Austrians from Przemyśl in November of 1914 knew that the time had come for him to get himself away from Przemyśl if he could. Commander-in-chief Conrad von Hoetzendorf, since retired, was unable to keep the danger a secret. It was necessary for him, before giving the word to retreat, to remove as many as he could of his sick and wounded from the threatened town. For a week before the retreat wounded soldiers were sent out of the city afoot to find their way, as best they could, through the Carpathian passes back to the town of Sanok, fifty miles away.

I saw these bandaged, suffering hundreds climbing and slipping in the wet red clay, taking

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days to accomplish a journey that might have been done in two hours on the railroad. The roadside shrines—little wooden crosses bearing crude figures of the Christ—attracted them as does a lighted window a benighted traveler, and some of them who dragged themselves to these outdoor altars stretched out there and died in the mud. Soldiers who were well and strong saw these things.

It is terrifying to a soldier to learn that as soon as he is sick or wounded he will be discarded and turned out in the open to care for himself or to die like an animal. The Austrian soldiers figured that von Hoetzendorf would not permit wounded soldiers to be treated in this way if he could avoid it. They estimated that he was choosing the lesser evil in sending them out of Przemyśl. And if this cavalcade of misery were the lesser evil, what might be the greater?

Surely it must be something to be afraid of.

I saw the Crown Prince of Austria, now the Emperor, come into Przemyśl one Saturday in an automobile that skidded dangerously over the wet, mud-covered cobblestones of the neglected streets. At seven o'clock the next morning he attended a mass said for the men who had been selected to remain in Przemyśl

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after the Russians had surrounded it. Incidentally, four months later the Russians captured one hundred and forty thousand of the men who had been the subjects of those prayers. That mass put the finishing touches on the alarm that was spreading through the Austrian forces.

“When are we going?” “When do we get out of here?” “How long is this general going to keep us here?” “The Russians must be getting nearer; their guns are louder to-day.” “The Cossacks are with the Russians.” We heard such remarks on all sides.

When the order to retreat came the next day, it was a frightened army that set out unctuously to obey it. “Retire,” said the general; and retire we did, though not very rapidly. Even the railroad seemed paralyzed with fear; trains moved, cow-catcher to caboose, five minutes at a stretch, and then halted for an hour in a wholesale blockade. We traveled nineteen miles in the first twelve hours. On the wagon-road, alongside of the railway line, thousands of wagons moved, with the drivers shouting and beating their tired horses. All order and system broke down.

Before the rout was over, so the coffee-house

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stories in Vienna had it, two train-loads of wounded men, shunted on a side-track, were forgotten and died without care. Men perished along the road of exhaustion.

The second retreat was the departure of the Austrians from Serbia a month later. Again von Hoetzendorf waited too long. His army of Serbian invasion, with an impetus which he did not try to check, was forcing back the Serbians, who seemed to make no resistance. I went along in this forward Austrian rush, riding in a springless, seatless wagon, sleeping in schoolhouses or whatever other building afforded shelter, sharing the belief of the soldiers around me that Serbia had been overwhelmed and her army dispersed. But the Serbians reached the mountains, where they got new ammunition and a new toe-hold. It was too late, again, for von Hoetzendorf to try to persuade the troops that there was no cause for fear. Hatless, gunless, waterless, foodless, the Austrian soldiers, each man for himself, found their way back to the Save River and crossed to the shelter of Hungary. Since these two retreats the German-Austrian forces have, of course, regained all the ground, and more, that was lost on those two occasions.

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A year later, on a hill in Bulgaria, near the town of Kostorino, a French soldier, of the army of General Sarrail, stopped me as I walked along a mountain road, and said:

"Pardon me, monsieur, but it is so long since I have seen any man in the comfortable clothes of a civilian that I feel I must speak to you."

I have always insisted that a war correspondent can make more friends in a golf costume than in a war correspondent's garb.

"*Mon Dieu!* Are you a tourist?" This from another soldier.

"Don't be a fool. He must be a *correspondent de guerre*." This from a third.

They invited me to their dugout on the mountainside, gave me a hot drink consisting of nineteen parts rum and one part tea, and then started to pump me.

"We go from here to-morrow. Have you heard that news back in Salonica?"

I had not.

"I hear that we are to be taken to Egypt to fight along the Suez Canal. Egypt is beautiful in the winter."

I had heard no such rumor.

"Well, then, have you heard at headquarters that we are to be moved at all?"

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No, I hadn't.

"Well, we are sure we are going some place away from here. All the soldiers are talking about it."

These men were under a good general. The next day they were to retreat toward Greece; they were going to run and not be scared. Thirty thousand of them were going to fall back ninety miles without a flutter of fear, though outnumbered six to one. In their retreat from Serbia I sat with these Frenchmen at their camp-fires and in their tents, talking with them, playing poker; but never once did I hear a private soldier mention the idea of retreat.

"I made one error in that retreat," General Sarraill told us, after his troops had safely reached Greek soil. "Near Krivolak I permitted a large store of supplies to accumulate within six hundred meters of the enemy, and I lost twenty men who tried to save them. Otherwise I am satisfied with the results."

The fourth retreat was that of Colonel Vassich, the defender of Monastir, and the last Serbian commander to leave the soil of his native land. It was the blind faith of the Serbians in Colonel Vassich, and their un-



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reasoning obedience, that made their retreat from the southwestern corner of Serbia an orderly one.

"Here is where we make our last stand," Colonel Vassich explained to three American correspondents whom he took to the front two days before his retreat. We saw that a trench which ran along the face of a hill skirted a small stone monument in such a way that the monument itself, a queer piece of carving standing solitary in the bleak Macedonian countryside, formed a shelter for several of the small band of Serbians whom the colonel had selected to hold off the Bulgar rush.

"This monument, you see, marks the spot where two thousand Serbians were killed or wounded when my troops took the city of Monastir from the Turks in the last Balkan war three years ago. If a Serbian wouldn't be willing to die fighting with that monument in view, there wouldn't be a drop of fighting blood in his body," added the colonel.

They were mostly middle-aged men in the trench. They kept their eyes fixed on the six-mile valley that spread between them and Prilepe.

"Don't let them come too fast," Colonel



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Vassich told them, as he went along the trench. "The best Bulgarian cavalry will come across that valley. Think, my children, of being able to stand off the Fourth Cavalry."

He was referring to Prince Cyril's own regiment, every man of which is said to be as handsome as a hero in *Graustark*.

"I am depending upon you to hold them," were his parting words.

Some promised verbally to do it; others smiled cheerfully; one old man patted his rifle.

We passed down behind the hill, and sat on the ground to eat. During the meal a band of soldiers came with a dozen oxen, hitched them to a three-inch gun that stood in a field near by, dragged it from its cellar-like hiding-place, and moved into the roadway, a leisurely and grotesque cavalcade. It was all part of the retreat, the moving of this gun; but it was done as deliberately as a house-moving. For miles along the range of hills that formed Colonel Vassich's line the same activity was under way; but no one was frightened. There was something in the personality of this thin, pale commander—he was ill and was wrapped in a blanket and a huge muffler—that seemed

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to suggest to the minds of his soldiers the nobility of death itself.

When the time came to run, two days later, the line of middle-aged men in the trench beside the monument did not fall backward; it fell instead, after a time, earthward—wiped out by the Bulgarian fire. And the remainder of Colonel Vassich's army, knowing that the front line would fight to the finish, moved to safety, without panic, while the men on the hillside were dying.

In reality, there are only three kinds of retreats, and I have described them all. One is the retreat in which the men see the danger and run in panic; another is the retreat in which the men do not see the danger, but move blindly, under orders; and the third—the Serbian kind—is the retreat in which men, seeing the danger, but trusting their commander, turn backward with as much coolness as they might, in going forward, turn to the right or the left to avoid an obstacle. Only the great leaders can conduct a retreat like that.

**SPY-STRAINERS OF EUROPE**



## SPY-STRAINERS OF EUROPE

I CANNOT open the stage door and welcome my readers to the "behind-the-scenes" of war-reporting without asking them to consider, for a time, the extreme difficulty which the merest traveling has entailed for the correspondent who tried to move from one great news center to another as the spotlight of war's activities shifted over the face of Europe.

In almost every corner of Europe I have seen piles of trunks and luggage which Americans, in their headlong flight from war in July of 1914, abandoned as useless impedimenta. They were mute testimonials, these mounds of baggage, to the good judgment of those who hurried out of Europe at that time, though they were also heart-touching and desolate tokens of the golden happiness which this world used to know back in that golden time of peace.

Every now and then some despairing hotel owner or storekeeper in Europe looks into the

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future for comfort and winds up his autotelling of fortunes by saying, "When this war is over there will be such a rush to Europe as we've never seen before."

He's right. There will be a rush and we'll be in it. Thrifty, far-sighted souls in Europe are preparing for it, and have been preparing for some time.

There's a wood along the British front in Belgium called Ploegsteert by the Belgians and Plugstreet by the British Tommies. It is a mile and a half long and three-quarters of a mile wide, and streets have been cut through it, paved in corduroy fashion, and named after thoroughfares in London. It is dotted with graves. A brewer in Armentières owns Ploegsteert grove; he used it as a home for his pheasants. But he can sell it any time he wishes to for ten times more than it was ever worth before the war. American tourists-to-be may rest assured that Ploegsteert will be ready to receive them almost as soon as they are able to journey there.

This time is not yet. The day is still in the future when hundreds of thousands of American school-children shall hear their teachers tell of their summer visit to the battle-fields of

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Europe; the dusky winter afternoon is still beyond us when club-women, at tea, shall hear from the lips of a fellow-member the story of "What I saw on the battle-fields of Europe." Americans haven't tried to tour Europe, and well it is that they haven't. This tempting ground is closed to them. Early in the war it was only the battle zone from which tourists were excluded, but as the war has advanced travel has become more and more difficult until to-day it may be said, generally speaking, that all of Europe is closed to travelers and will remain so until the war is ended.

This situation is due to the constant search for spies and the constantly growing experience and expertness of those officials of the various nations who are charged with the duty of spy-catching and with the continual improvement in the system by which spies are strained out of the mass of ordinary harmless human beings. There are spy-strainers all over Europe, and the traveler must pass through them, not only at the expense of his comfort, but to his utter humiliation and perhaps even to alarm for his own safety.

In the first place, you're guilty whether you are a war correspondent or not. This is the

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chief difficulty of traveling in Europe to-day. The military law, working backward and putting the reverse on the civil law, considers a man guilty until he proves himself innocent. It matters not what crime may be laid at your door. Do they suspect you of being a friend of the enemy? You are considered guilty until you prove yourself innocent. Or of being a spy? You are considered guilty. All the officials who have to do with your case treat you as if you were guilty; they stop short only of shooting you. And the chief way, the best and surest way, to raise suspicion against yourself in any country in Europe to-day is to travel or to exhibit a passport which shows that since the war began you have passed through a number of belligerent or neutral European countries. The foreign traveler in Europe must be constantly proving that he is not a spy, and though this is not usually a difficult proceeding, in spite of the fact that the various spy-strainers vary in their austerity and thoroughness, nevertheless the operation is so unpleasant and is attended by so many humiliating features that you soon sicken of the effort to travel and decide to settle down in one place and remain there with as little moving about as possible. Which is



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exactly what the military authorities want you to do.

It is no military secret that spy-strainers are scattered through Europe at all frontier railroad stations or landing-docks. These spy-strainers consist of boards of officials, including military, police and civil, and the men constituting these boards, usually numbering from four to ten, have become so expert, during two years of war, in carrying out their duties, so expert and at times so regardless of the traveler's comforts and rights, that after a short experience with them the traveler views his approach to them with dread and begins to look upon them as bearing some relation to the old Inquisition. There is little danger of your being thrown into a cell unless the officials have the goods on you, but the sound of the firing-squad's volley or the clank of the cell door is always in the future perfect tense with you, and the officials make it a point to have you believe that one or the other of these noises is always just about to ring in your ears. Travel as you will, if you are lucky enough to have papers that will permit you to do so; laugh as you please at these grim men sitting at their rough table in some grimy room of a railroad station, conscious of your innocence

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of any guilt—nevertheless, way down in your soul you'll feel stirrings of alarm as, stern-faced, they deal with your case and listen to your proof that you're not deserving of imprisonment or death. You're guilty; they think so. You must prove to them that they're wrong; they're not particularly anxious to have you succeed in this—they're not lawyers; they are only civilians, though some of them wear uniforms; they don't know the legal rules of justice; their code is grim and sinister; they have absolute power over you for the time; they ask you whatever questions they choose, with no regard for the intimacies of your life; they search your pockets and your baggage. To them you are a potential spy. They are trying to prove it. You are trying to prove that you are not. If you fail and they succeed—well, no amount of experience with these spy-sifting boards causes you to regard that prospect with equanimity.

A man was shot in the Tower of London recently, though he bore a good passport of a neutral nation, a passport correct in every detail. So far, in respect to his case, the British Government has issued only the mere statement which ran in effect: "A man was convicted

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as a spy by court-martial yesterday and sentenced to death. The sentence was carried out at the Tower of London this morning." If we follow this man through the various stages of his travels up to the stone wall in the heart of London where he met his death, we shall see what sort of sinister folk these members of the spy-straining boards really are. It was by telling a story of a dying mother to whose bedside in another neutral country he had been summoned that this man secured his passport. He prevailed on an official of a certain legation in Holland to issue him a passport, and his proofs of citizenship in the neutral country seemed flawless. It was necessary for him to travel through England, he said, in order to reach his home. He first went to the British consul in Rotterdam and secured a visé, together with permission to enter England. With his viséd passport he hurried to Flushing, whence a tri-weekly boat crosses the mined North Sea to England. He encountered the first spy-sifting board at Flushing, a conglomerate board made up of Hollanders assisted by Ally officials.

Not a bit of trouble did he have. All of the officials were courteous, asking few questions and showing no suspicion of his bona-fides.

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On to the Flushing boat he stepped, and the moment the boat drew away from shore he was a doomed man. The step he took on the deck of the Flushing boat was as fatal as the last step he took to his place before the firing-wall.

A few hours later he reached an English port. He called a porter to carry his bags and hurried off the boat in order to be among the first to be passed by the passport officials, otherwise known as the spy-strainers. The boat-train was waiting at the dock ready to carry the passengers to London. At last his turn came to enter the little room in which the passport officials sat; he found himself face to face with seven men. They were exceedingly courteous. Their curiosity about him was not great. They asked him perfunctory questions in a perfunctory way, looked at his passport, and finally jabbed it with a big rubber stamp which said, in effect, "Welcome to England." Our hero dashed out to the train, got one of the best seats, and a few hours later was in London. And all this time he was doomed to die. The British consul at Rotterdam knew he was a German spy. The spy-strainer at Flushing, as he stood before them, answering their questions and their smiles, knew it. The seven men at the rough

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table in the grimy room at the English port knew not only that he was a spy, but they knew as well that he, being on English soil, was as good as a dead man.

Why didn't they arrest him at the English port? So asks the layman. But the question shows the difference between the layman and these sinister spy-strainers through whose hands the traveler in Europe these days must pass. Follow our hero just a few days more, in London, and we'll see why he wasn't arrested at the port of entry. Join in with a set of Scotland Yard men and follow our hero. He meets several persons in London, some secretly, some openly; he dines with several. After the Scotland Yard men have traced out the identities of all of his acquaintances and found their addresses, our hero is arrested. He can help Scotland Yard no more; he's a sucked lemon, as they see him. His days of liberty in London are ended. The goods are on him. The rest is only a formality. He is a crack German spy sifted out by the spy-strainers, and it had always been in his stars that he should die a spy's death. His fate, which had followed him like a faithful hound, caught up to him at sunrise one morning in the old Tower of London.

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They have got nicks in their guns, these spy-strainers; by this time, in the progress of the war, there is hardly a frontier spy-strainer that hasn't caught its man and sent him to death. In the little rooms in which they sit the spy-catchers have seen tragedies worked out to all but the sound of the shots of the firing-squad.

"Call an interpreter for this gentleman," said a French officer at a French frontier post when he heard me, in French, trying to tell a man with a pen and a big book my life-history. "This is a matter of life and death, and you can't be sure that you understand him."

I smiled and asked him not to worry about me. But he didn't smile; he was worrying. I knew that I was not a spy and that I was safe. But he didn't know it. He had seen men sitting in the chair where I was seated telling what purported to be their life-stories to this same man with the same pen and the same big book, and he had seen these men led off to die the death of spies. That chair and that book looked grimmer to him than they did to me, as I look back at it now, and he thought I was a fool not to feel that the matter was freighted with importance. To his military mind I was guilty until I had proved myself innocent, and how

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could I prove myself innocent in such atrocious French?

Facing these men, answering their questions, standing by while your baggage is being ransacked, missing your trains because you are held on suspicion, are all daily episodes in traveling in Europe these days. Proving every twenty-four hours to a new set of men that you ought not to be shot is nerve-racking business; resisting their honest and patriotic efforts to send you, in the train of other men who have passed through their hands, to the firing-squad takes all of the joy out of traveling and serves to convince you that you, as a mere traveler, are not wanted anywhere except by the folks back home.

Set out with me, as the travel lecturers say, from New York for a tour of Europe these days, and let us see what adventures with the spy-strainers befall us. Remembering, please, that what follows hereafter is based on the personal experience of the writer, whose credentials as a neutral correspondent were invariably gilt-edged, let us all flock down to the dining-room of our ship, as she approaches Liverpool, to be ready to meet these spy-catchers when they board the boat. Incidentally we flock down



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there because we are ordered to do so; every other part of the ship is closed to us, and we become a mere part of a mere herd. It is Sunday morning, nine o'clock. A tug draws up alongside and a dozen men, some in khaki, some in customs blue, and others in civilian garb, climb on to our deck and come down into the dining-room. A corner of the room has been roped off. The officials go to that corner and seat themselves at a long table spread for a meal. They raise knives and forks and glance expectantly toward the door leading to the kitchen. Stewards bearing coffee, toast, bacon and eggs, kidneys, and all the other requisites of an honest British breakfast enter breathlessly and deposit these victuals before the passport officials. For one hour you sit there in the dining-room, which you are not permitted to leave, and watch these officials partake of breakfast. They don't hurry; they don't care whether you miss the train to London; the restaurants in Liverpool are not open on Sunday mornings, and one must have one's breakfast before one begins to sift out a crowd of foreigners like this one. You glimpse the idea that you are not particularly welcome in England. These officials act as if they didn't care whether you came to Eng-



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land or not; as if, indeed, they wished the whole boat-load had stayed at home.

Your life-history is gone into, you finally succeed in proving yourself honest, and at last you reach London. Here, at the hotel, you answer more questions about yourself on a blank which the hotel clerk gives you. Within twenty-four hours of your arrival you must also report, personally, at the police station in your district. "I've arrived," you say in effect to the police sergeant. "I'm at such and such a hotel. I intend to remain in London so and so many weeks." The sergeant puts this all down in his big book and then suggests that if you wish to travel outside of London anywhere in his "right little, tight little isle," you must have an identity book.

"But I've got my American passport," you say.

"You must have an identity book as well, sir."

This is your first inkling of the fact that an American passport is no good in Europe; that it is, indeed, an object of suspicion. American passports were so easy to get at the beginning of the war, they have been so generally counterfeited and forged, and so many spies have

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been caught traveling with credentials from the United States Government, that the time has come when an American passport no longer stands on its own legs. In England your passport must be backed up by an identity book, which is not granted to you until the police officials have looked up your record and until you have found two British property-holders who will sign their names in your book and agree to hold themselves responsible for your good faith. The French distrust American passports to such an extent that they have issued a special passport of their own, which is known as a supplementary passport, and all your French visés will be stamped on the supplement and not on the passport issued by Washington.

The Italians are not so suspicious of American passports as are the French, nevertheless your passport in any Italian city must be backed up by a certificate of registration which is issued to you when you report at the central police station.

The Germans, while they went through the form of recognizing American passports before the break with the United States occurred, never in reality placed any confidence in them. The

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American in Switzerland or Holland who desired to go into Germany was given a special pass in most instances, and very often his passport would not be stamped in any way by German officials. Thus when he left Germany he surrendered his pass, and there were no marks on his passport to indicate that a German official had ever gazed upon it. This custom of the Germans caused American passports to be viewed with additional suspicion in Ally countries.

But back to London. Having secured the identity book to back up your passport, you may travel more or less freely over England, Scotland, or Wales. But you must register every departure and every arrival at the nearest police station.

Then comes the day when you wish to go to France. You find it a three-day job to get your papers ready. You must check out at the police station and have your identity book stamped. You must persuade the passport officials at the French permit-office that you have business in France and that you are entitled to a French supplementary passport. Four photographs of yourself are demanded (you soon learn to carry a dozen little photo-

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graphs of yourself, ready for such demands), and these are pasted on your passport, on your request for a French passport, on your request for a request for your French passport, and into a big book.

Now you are carrying three identification papers; your American passport, your French supplement, and your identity book. Before you board the boat which is to carry you across the Channel—if it doesn't hit a mine or collide with a torpedo—you must pass through the spy-straining board at the pier. These seven men, at two o'clock in the morning, after they have kept you waiting in a line for perhaps three hours, look over your papers as if they were undoubtedly counterfeit. All the proofs of your honesty and your good will which you established in London only twenty-four hours before in order to secure the papers go for naught. You've got to repeat them here. These men are from Missouri. It is difficult to be patient with them, but you had better be. Just a little nervousness, just a little irritation on your part may be like a breeze that will flame their smoldering spark of suspicion into a flame of accusation, which will make your position all the more difficult and will certainly

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cause you to miss the boat. But at last they permit you to depart.

Six hours later you reach Dieppe. You are herded into another waiting line. Little does it avail you that, back in London, at the French permit-office, during your long negotiations for a passport, you became so well acquainted with the French officials that they smiled at you and seemed to like you. The members of this French spy-straining board also hail, psychologically speaking, from the region of Kansas City. They do not know you; they seem sure that your papers were forged. They ask you to stand aside out of line; you realize that your American passport is working its usual evil task of stirring suspicion against you. If it were a Spanish passport, or a Chinese, South American, Portuguese, Norwegian, Swedish, or Danish passport, you might stand in line and take your turn with these other travelers. But a special investigator is sent to you. He looks over all your papers in one corner of the room and asks you interminable lists of questions. He finally permits you to take a place at the end of the line, though you were well up in front when he hauled you aside. And then, when your turn comes before the examining

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board, they ask you all the questions that were put to you by the special examiner, and a lot more. It does not matter to them that this special examiner was satisfied that you were honest and safe; they demand that you satisfy them. The train for Paris may be blowing its warning whistle of departure; the conductor may be shouting, "*En voiture*"; there may be no other train for Paris for twenty-four hours. These details do not matter. The spy-strainer doesn't care whether you get to Paris or not—in fact, it is holding you back because it thinks perhaps it doesn't want you to go to Paris after all. During all these hours a waiting porter is handling your baggage. A porter is never satisfied with less than a dollar at one of these spy-straining stations. He must bring in your trunks from the baggage-car and your grips from the day-coach, put them together on the examining-table, and wait by your side until the military officials have ransacked them and asked you questions about every piece of paper they find. It is often a three- or four-hour task, and the dollar he gets from you is all the money he will earn that day. Three dollars for porters is what a fair-minded traveler should pay on a journey from London to Paris, which

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amounts to 25 per cent. of his entire railroad and boat fare.

The step from France to Italy is the least difficult of all the frontier crossings in Europe, and as soon as you get your certificate of registration in whatever city of Italy you intend to visit, you may remain without further worry for an indefinite length of time.

And now for the next to the hardest jump in Europe; the hardest one comes later. Follow me through Milan to the Swiss border. It was on a Sunday afternoon that we piled off a train at Lake Como and were herded into the railroad station where the Italian spy-strainers sat.

I had four pieces of baggage, and an Italian soldier seized them from the porter and savagely opened them and threw the contents on a table. He was only making a cursory examination; just looking for something to hang a suspicion on. He found papers galore, newspaper clippings, magazines, old letters, a box of coins, a set of poker chips, and a mysterious sheet of paper on which John McCutcheon had kept a score of a domino game and had drawn caricatures of James Hare and myself opposite our respective scores instead of writing our names.



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I seated myself in a corner of the room and awaited developments. Two hours passed, and my train for Switzerland pulled out of the station. Another hour passed and another train got away. I asked to be allowed to walk around the town; I wanted to see Lake Como.

"Wait here," was the order I received.

Twice during the afternoon soldiers and civilians emptied my trunks and grips and then piled the belongings back helter-skelter.

"What are you waiting for?" I demanded at last.

"An interpreter. All these papers must be read."

"But I'll miss my train."

"You can stay here to-night."

"In the railroad station?"

A shrug of the shoulders.

An hour later a pretty girl entered the waiting-room and said: "I have come to see your papers. Where is the paper with the odd markings?" She was asking for the McCutcheon score-card. McCutcheon keeps score by putting down four perpendicular marks very neatly and crossing them with another mark, also very neatly, the resulting drawing somewhat resembling a garden gate and meaning 5.



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"This is a domino score-card," I explained, showing the document.

"What is domino?"

"It's a game." I drew a picture of a double blank. She did not recognize it. By a proper distribution of dots I converted the blank into a double six. She understood and, to my surprise, she returned the document to me, saying, "Well, that's all right." Why this curiously marked paper should have been all right I never have been able to understand. In spy's code it might have meant anything. I had trembled when I saw it turn up among my papers, for I had forgotten that I was in possession of a McCutcheon.

"Now I must read all these papers," said the girl, with a weary sigh. There were half a dozen Italian spy-catchers standing about watching me closely and listening to her occasional asides, made in Italian.

"But I can't do it to-night," she added.

"That means I miss the night train to Switzerland."

"It is too much work for one evening. I have only a knowledge of English from school, and I do not read rapidly."

A happy thought struck me.

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“If I put all these papers into envelopes and mail them to my office in London, they will pass through the hands of Italian, French, and British censors,” I suggested. “Why is it necessary for you to read them? If I put them into the mail you may be certain that the enemy will never see them.”

She went into the office of the chief spy-catcher and laid the happy idea before him. Then she returned and said, “Have you any envelopes?” I had six big linen ones.

“Very well,” she said. “Now you write your London address on the envelopes while I gather your papers together.”

She said something to the six big spy-catchers, and they pounced on my possessions a fourth time. They turned the pockets of my clothes inside out. They searched me. And finally, when every bit of printed or written matter that they could find had come to light and been heaped in a mound on the table, they jammed the things back into my trunks and bags. Meanwhile the girl, with the dull glare of a huge kerosene-lamp lighting up her pretty face and glorifying her soft chestnut hair, was packing the papers into the envelopes. She wasn't too pretty to be businesslike

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and careful; she was doing her job thoroughly. I tried to help her, but she said: "Please let me do it. I must know where all these papers go." She licked the envelopes and sealed them. "Now if you will give me some money for stamps, I will have a soldier put them in the mail-box," she said.

The soldier returned shortly with receipts which showed that he had registered the letters.

I gave him the change, got on the waiting train, and ten minutes later I was in Switzerland. Six weeks later my envelopes turned up in London bearing the marks of Italian, French, and British censors. I looked for the McCutcheon score-card, which no censor in the world could ever figure out. It was there, badly thumbed, resembling somewhat an old master.

When you're in Switzerland you're in a pickle. This island of peace, surrounded by an ocean of trouble, is no easy place to leave, and the tightest spy-strainer in all Europe is at Pontarlier, on the French border. They can sicken your soul, those dozen Frenchmen at Pontarlier. They've got niches in their guns. They have caught spies, who have been shot, and they are trying to catch more.

"It's a matter of life and death here," ex-

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plained, in half-hearted apology, a whiskered French officer who had once lived in Cleveland, Ohio. "We are constantly sending our spies into Germany by this route, and the Germans are always trying to get their spies into France through this station. We're out for blood here." But he didn't render this explanation until I had been put through a twenty-four-hour grilling.

I wonder if the pretty little American woman, with the red-silk knitted sweater, is still worrying her heart out in the Hotel des Postes at Pontarlier, where the French had held her three weeks on suspicion. I wonder what her name was. I wonder if she is still alive. She, in her red sweater, is one of the three war pictures burnt most deeply into my mind. One of these is the strained face of an old, white-haired English Tommy, marching to the front with the reinforcements during the second battle of Ypres, with the battle only half an hour's march distant and his strength failing; he was hanging on to the rear of a wagon, with his teeth set, almost exhausted but determined to go into the fight. Did he get there and did he live through it?

The second is the figure of a blue-eyed youth,

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lying on a stretcher on the floor at the entrance of a factory which had been turned into a hospital at Béthune, during the same battle. He was covered by a blanket, but he was quivering like a leaf. Doctors, stretcher-bearers, and nurses dashed past him. His great blue eyes followed every one of them expectantly, but none of them stopped. His eyes caught mine; he smiled wearily and closed them. He saw I was only a civilian. I've often wondered who he was, what was his name, where his loved ones were waiting for him, and whether he lived.

And the third picture, just as sinister as the other two, is that of this black-eyed American woman, in her red-silk sweater, a prisoner of the spy-catchers in the hotel at Pontarlier. There were deep, black rings under her eyes. The matron of the little hotel told me she had not eaten for ten days. "I don't want to talk to you," she said to me. "I don't want them to think that I know you. How do I know you're not a spy?"

"But your name? I'll tell the American consul at Paris that you are held here. I'm a newspaper man from New York."

"How do I know that? I don't want to be

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seen talking to you. This hotel is full of spies."

She returned to her room, and I never saw her again. There were fifteen persons being held in that little hotel, men and women of misty nationality who had tried to come into France from Switzerland, and who had been caught as suspects in the Pontarlier spy-strainer. They were afraid to talk to me; they were afraid to talk to each other; they suspected each other as much as the spy-catchers did. As I look back now at those three Sunday meals in the dining-room of the Hotel des Postes and see these silent, mysterious, worried men and women file into the room, one at a time, solitary, suspected, and eaten with suspicion, it seems to me that they were the most miserable and unhappy lot of human beings that I have seen in all the war. I wonder whether any of them really were spies. I wonder whether any of them—that young fellow with the light, curly hair, or the pretty girl who said she was a Swiss opera-singer, or the tall, gloomy, sunken-eyed man with the frock coat—have been shot by now. But most of all I wonder who that American woman was, and whether she was really guiltless. I suppose she wonders

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the same of me—was I an Ally spy, sent to the hotel to try to trap her? I played a silly little card game with the matron of the hotel and her daughter and grandson in the smoking-room that afternoon, at the matron's invitation, and I think that fact proved to all the suspects that I was really in cahoots with the French military authorities, for how could a suspect throw off his worries sufficiently to play cards?

But I was worried. It didn't matter that, in ransacking my baggage, the spy-catchers had found a personal letter from President Wilson, on White House stationery, and a second letter, same stationery, from Secretary Joseph Tumulty. It didn't matter that they had come across a cigar-box full of newspaper clippings, with my name printed in each story. It didn't matter that my passports were perfect and that I had letters from Lord Northcliffe, from William G. Sharp, the ambassador to France, and from other notable persons. None of these things mattered to the grim, whiskered Frenchman from Cleveland, Ohio, who said that everything that happened at Pontarlier was a matter of life or death. Angrily, in my presence, he tore up the telegram that I tried to send to the American embassy in Paris.



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He wouldn't talk about Cleveland, though I did get out of him the fact that he thought "Bryan was a damn fool." He wouldn't smile or even be courteous. He talked English as well as I did, and I got out of him at last the fact that he knew Newton D. Baker, the American Secretary of War, when Baker was mayor of Cleveland. But Cleveland and the United States were behind him; he was all for France, and his job was to save France from spies. If I were a spy, even though I might have been his next-door neighbor in Cleveland on Fifty-ninth Street, where he said he lived, he'd have turned me over to die without a qualm. He was the grimmest, most merciless spy-catcher I have ever seen, among the hundreds that have obstructed my travels.

"What more do you want?" I said to him, angrily, as Sunday afternoon wore on toward evening and the departure of the train to Paris drew near. "Here are these letters and these clippings and these passports. What more proof do you want that I'm all right?"

"Listen," he said. "The man that these letters were written to is all right. The man named in these passports is all right. He can go into France, and welcome. But how the



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devil do I know that you are that man? How do I know that you didn't murder that man and take these papers away from him?"

There you are. Suspicion has grown so deep in Europe, the war madness has become so strong, that it has finally reached the stage where you must prove that you are you; that this body in which you are toting yourself around is really your own. It's too much to prove; it can't be done. I don't know how the whiskered Frenchman from Cleveland, the grimmest spy-catcher in Europe, at last satisfied himself that I was really I. That night, after a twenty-four-hour detention, I was told by an orderly that I might catch the train for Paris. I did not see the Cleveland man again, but I hope for various reasons that I meet him some day in Cleveland or in France when the good old days of travel return.

It would be interesting to hear his explanation.

Perhaps it would run about like this:

"We don't want people traveling about France, and we made things as uncomfortable for you as we could because we thought you might write an article about your experience that would discourage travelers." Well, here it is.



THE SCAR THAT TRIPLED



## THE SCAR THAT TRIPLED

**H**E is over at the front in France now, if he is still alive, with three scars across his stomach instead of the one that Richard Harding Davis knew. When Davis wrote his story about this youth with the scar—his last story, called “The Deserter,” which appeared in the September number of the *Metropolitan Magazine*—we were all in so much doubt whether the one scar was honorable or not that Davis did not even mention the scar in what he wrote. But Davis, if he were alive to-day and knew the sequel to “The Deserter,” might well write a new story of it all and call it, perhaps, “The Scar that Tripled.”

The youth came to Salonica on a British troop-ship, a sergeant in the British army, though an American to the core. He went to the muddy outskirts of Salonica to live in a tent.

John McCutcheon, James H. Hare, and I

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reached Salonica on an Italian passenger-steamer and, after a long search for rooms in which to live and work, we rented one huge chamber in the Olympus Palace Hotel, which had once been used as the quarters of the Austrian club of Salonica, and settled down to our jobs of getting war news. The hotel stood on the water-front, and we arranged our three work-tables at the front windows so that all the myriad activities of the allied troops were stretched out before our view. Curtains of vast dimensions bisected the room, and we slept and dressed in the rear part. Heavy rugs, big chairs, two steam-radiators, a perpetual bottle of seltzer and several frequently replenished bottles of various liquors, together with a push-button that might be used to summon steaming hot tea or coffee at any hour of the day, gave our quarters a semblance of luxury. True enough, we were not "at home" for weeks at a time, because our trips to the front were frequent, and "roughing it" fell to our lot at least three-quarters of the time; but always, at the end of our trips, there was Room 14, as we called it, with its warmth and cleanliness and comfort.

It must have looked like a glimpse of heaven

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to the boy with the scar. To find us at all was something of a task for him. Salonica was the center of a whirlpool of racial bloods in November of 1915, when the Allies seized upon it as a military base. Tides of humanity were flowing to it from every corner of the earth. Mysterious Germans, whose civilian garb rested uneasily on military shoulders, came from the direction of Constantinople to mingle in the streets and cafés with officers of the invading armies. From the northwest came a tide of fugitive Servians, swept out of their country by the great brush of the German-Austrian-Bulgarian drive; a dirty tide, bearing the grime and nastiness which it had picked up in its course through the Balkan mountains. From the southwest came the great ships whose bottoms had sneaked through the underwater world past the waiting submarines, with their loads of blue French zouaves from Africa and khaki British troopers who had passed through the hell of the Dardanelles. From every direction there poured into the city families of nondescript blood, fleeing from their farms in Macedonia; mongrels of the Levant, babies, girls, boys, men, women, whose very mixture of blood was a token of other times in

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other centuries when men of various nations had dashed to this same old battle-field of Macedonia to debauch themselves in war. The tide grew in force and volume. Hindoo soldiers appeared, and black French Africans; queer Cochin-China troops, with peaked wide hats; and Russian soldiers from a great seven-stacked Russian battle-cruiser. The city itself possessed the dignity of a rock about which a whirlpool surges; with the benignity of the ages upon it, accustomed, through the centuries to the massacres of pagans and the reddest cruelties of the reddest Roman emperors, it lay placid and unastonished in the Ægean sunshine, resting in its own dirt like a Brahmin yogi whose philosophy has raised him above the filth and clamor that surround him in the market-place. Mount Olympus, across the bay, where the gods used to play until human doubts routed them to some spot we have not yet discovered, looked down on the welter with an equal indifference. And in the midst of this storm of humanity the youth with the scar found us in Room 14.

To us, on his first visit, he was only an American boy in the British army; not a rare bird, by any means, considering that there are some



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twelve thousand of them. He was only one of the little side eddies that used to sweep into our chamber. British war correspondents came to play poker and talk news; British officers "poked in" for tea or a whisky and soda, happy to get into an atmosphere of peace and away from the monotony of camp; French officers who could talk English dropped in to practise English on us; Americans in trouble found their way there, and strange males of the uncertain breeds of the Levant, but Americans through naturalization, came to us for help and chatted, in weird English, of New York, Chicago, or other American cities in which they had lived. I will not say that all these visits were due to our popularity. Charlie, the porter, who guarded the portals of the hotel, took it upon himself, shortly after our arrival, to sift from the crowd at the door all mortals of whatever sex, race, class, or color who might, in his opinion, interest us, and sent them to our room. "A man to see you, misters," he would announce at our door, and the new-comer, often unwillingly and sometimes feeling himself betrayed, would enter our room. More often than not the mortal in question had not asked to see us and did not even know

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us, and, for our part, we rarely knew what Charlie had found interesting in the strangers whom he turned into our presence. He would merely turn them in, as a farmer turns a cow into a pasture without introducing it to the other live stock, and depart, leaving us to become acquainted as best we might. One time it was an English lord—though we didn't know it was a lord—that Charlie herded into our chamber. He had led a score of English nurses through the Servian rout, and only an hour before he had reached Salonica, after twenty days of utter hardship and danger. He almost went to sleep as he drank our tea and as we dragged from him a story of his experiences that was shortly speeding under the seas by cable to New York.

In a way, it was Charlie, a huge Levantine, who was responsible for Davis's story of "The Deserter," for he brought Davis and the boy with the scar together in our room. True enough, the boy had seen an item in a little French military newspaper that we were in Salonica and had set out to seek us. But Charlie had steered—or shall I say dragged?—Davis to us. At dusk, one evening, a huge American stepped off a Greek boat on the

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water-front and made his way to the Olympus Palace Hotel. Charlie got him in his clutches.

"We haven't any room for you," said Charlie, "but some of your countrymen are in a room up-stairs. Maybe you'd like to see them."

"I don't want to visit with any fellow-countrymen just now," grunted the American. "I want a room."

"But these Americans are war correspondents."

"I don't want to see any war correspondents. What I want is a room."

"They've got a big room. Maybe they'll let you sleep with them until you find a place."

Patient Charlie! Whatever came to his net remained in it, big men or small, weak men or strong.

"Who are these fellows?" the big man asked, weakening.

"Don't know their names," lied Charlie, "but you'd better come up and see them. Maybe you can get a place to sleep."

Grudgingly the big man climbed the stairs, following Charlie. The big man had always disliked following anybody; had always disliked having anybody follow him. "He travels quickest who travels alone," had been his

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motto through a successful life. But even life mottoes must go hang when they stand in the way of a bed and a roof.

"A man to see you, misters," we heard Charlie say, and in the doorway we saw Davis batting his eyes at the brightness of the room. With a roar of pleasure he dashed in, after a moment's hesitation.

"You sons o' guns! You sons o' guns!" he shouted, in school-boy fashion. "I didn't know you fellows were in this corner of the earth. I thought you were all down in Mexico or France or Russia."

We talked far into the night about Mexico and Vera Cruz, where we had last met. At bedtime Davis stretched himself on a bed, improvised with a couch and a chair, wrapped blankets about his huge person, gave a grunt of physical satisfaction, and we heard nothing more from him until the next morning, when he aroused us with the whale-like blowings and snortings that invariably accompanied his cold, morning sponge-bath.

Thus Davis, for a time, was a fellow-occupant of Room 14, and when the boy with the scar entered our lives he entered Davis's also.

"A man to see you, misters"; it was in the

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accustomed way that Charlie introduced the boy with the scar. There was a clatter of heavy-soled army shoes at the door as a soldier, stepping past Charlie, entered the room with something of haste in his movement. His uniform was British, his stripes those of a sergeant, but his boyish, smiling face, in spite of its jaunty little British mustache, was American.

"I heard you fellows were here, and I couldn't stay away," he said, advancing with an attractive smile and an outstretched hand to McCutcheon. McCutcheon looks like Abraham Lincoln, and people seem to like to shake hands with him. "You'll have to forgive me for horning in on you this way, but ever since I read in the little French paper that you fellows were here, I've been trying to find you. I simply had to come and talk American for a while."

He was in the twenties and Middle Western. His speech was American college, and he laughed with his heart as well as his eyes. We got him seated and welcomed him. Would he have a drink? Or a cigar?

"I don't drink," he said. "Never did. But for a cigar I'd lay me down and dee."

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With the cigar came talk.

"God!" he exclaimed, "it's good to be with Americans. I like the British, but they're not home folks, after all. I've been with the British ever since the retreat from Mons. I joined at the very first as a private and I've worked my way up to sergeant. I served on the French and Belgian fronts, and now they've got us here in Servia. This is killing us, Salonica. Our tents are put up in the mud about six miles out from here. We haven't got any work to do now and so we're only waiting for something to turn up."

"Waiting is the toughest part of a soldier's life, isn't it?" suggested Davis.

"Well, fighting is bad enough. Aw! It's terrible! Do you know, I've seen everything done to human flesh that can be done to it. I've seen men whose nerves were cut apart and who suffered so much that opiates wouldn't put them to sleep. I'm tired of being nothing. That's what a man is in war—he's nothing. He mustn't ask questions; he mustn't think; he must obey orders. He must suffer by order and die by order, and not even know why the orders were given. You're nothing. It doesn't make any difference whether you're sick or

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cold or hungry. Nobody cares but yourself, and you've really no right to care."

There was no chance for us to talk; he was too full of his subject.

"Why, it's so cold out in our tent," he continued, getting away from generalities to his latest concrete woe, "that we have to sleep under six blankets, and when we get up in the morning we're so tired from having eighteen pounds of blankets weighing down on us in the night, that we have to go back to bed again to get a rest. It's a terrible life and I'm fed up with it. I'm going to quit as soon as I can. To-day's leave of absence from camp is the first I've had in six weeks, and I'm so homesick for the United States that I can hardly wait until I get there."

"You've seen a lot of real fighting, then?" I asked.

"I've been right in the ruck in the heaviest trench fighting in France and Belgium," he said. "Good Lord, I've seen so many terrible things that I don't know whether I can ever become a quiet, decent American citizen again. You know, sometimes I get to thinking that if people knew how many horrors I've been mixed up in they would see something horrible



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in me and wouldn't want to have me around or talk to me. But I can't stand this Salonica cold and mud. I'm going to quit as soon as I can."

We couldn't pin him down to definite details about fighting and action at the front. Perhaps it was for this reason that we were all a little inclined to doubt some of the things he said. But at least we knew he was American and that he was leading a miserable life in the cold and mud of Macedonia, and that he did not owe anything especially to the British army, and that he was homesick. So, I confess, we agreed with him that it might be a sensible thing to quit while he was still alive, and go back home while the going was good.

"If I come here again, on my next leave of absence, will you fellows lend me some clothes?" he suddenly asked. "I'll have to go to the American consul here to get him to certify that I am an American citizen. I won't dare to go to the consulate in a British uniform, you know."

I remember that Davis laughingly said, as he looked down at his own huge frame and then at the slight figure of the youth, "You can just as well dare go in a British uniform as in any clothes I've got."



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But we had the clothes. McCutcheon could fit him out with shoes and a cap. I had an extra suit of clothes. Jimmy Hare had socks he could spare. We could fix him up with a very proper outfit in which to call on the consul.

"Righto!" he said. "On my next leave of absence I'll come to you fellows and start the ball rolling."

Then he said good night and started on a six-mile hike through the mud to his cold tent.

"A man to see you, misters," announced Charlie, early the next morning. Davis, McCutcheon, Hare, and I were seated at breakfast around a square parlor table at the foot of our disordered beds.

The American youth stamped into our presence.

"Didn't expect to see me so soon?" he asked, cheerfully. "Well, here I am, to borrow those clothes. Don't let me take you from breakfast. I'll just shave in this wash-basin, if you don't mind?"

"Sure! Sure!" exclaimed McCutcheon. "Want a razor?"

"No, thanks. I've got mine with me. Soldiers always carry their razors, you know."

While we ate breakfast the youth puttered

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around the washstand. We did not know what a big moment had come to him. As he tore off his mustache with a dull razor, groaning playfully meanwhile, we did not know that by the act he was breaking a military rule and committing a military offense that would take him to the guard-house for at least ten days.

"Now for the clothes," he said, as we arose from the table.

We got them out of our trunks and suit-cases for him, and when he had put them all in a pile on the couch which Davis used as a bed, making sure that every needful article was at hand, he tore off his mud-soaked, wrinkled khaki and threw it into a heap on the floor.

"Gee! How good it is to get that off and know that I've got something else to put on! Just think of having only one suit of clothes in the world and then having it dirty and wrinkled like that one! Why, I've worn that suit for over a year now! Bet none of you fellows ever wore the same suit every day for a year, Sundays and all. You don't know how sick a man can get of a suit of clothes."

"I should think that shell-fire and wounds and dead and dying men would be the chief things for a soldier to worry about," I said.

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"Wearing the same suit for a year doesn't seem so bad."

"You try it once," said the youth.

"Well, I've tried shell-fire, and that's pretty bad," said Hare.

"Wearing the same dirty suit for a solid year is worse."

The four of us were called from the hotel that morning, on various tasks, but we told the youth to make himself at home in our chamber.

When we returned at one o'clock in the afternoon he was sitting in a big chair reading a newspaper and smoking, clad in our assortment of clothes.

I think that I was the first to sense what was in the youth's mind, because he asked me if I wouldn't hide his uniform in some closet about the hotel, and, after three or four days, send it by a peasant courier back to his camp.

"Isn't everything all right?" I asked. "Didn't the consul give you an American passport?"

"No, he didn't. He said I would have to go to Athens for one. There's a boat sailing for Athens this afternoon, and I'm going on it."

"Going this afternoon?" asked McCutcheon, who had overheard the remark.

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"Yes, I am. I can't stand this any longer. That boat tied to the pier there"—it was not more than two hundred feet from the doorway of our hotel—"sails at four o'clock this afternoon. The minute I get on that boat I will be safe. Within twenty-four hours I'll be in Athens, which is neutral territory, and I can get a passport in Athens and catch a boat there directly for the United States. That's what I'm going to do." He spoke defiantly.

"Me for lunch," said Davis. By his remark he broke the spell of a deep and unpleasant study into which we had all fallen.

The three of us decided to accompany Davis.

"Make yourself at home," said McCutcheon to the youth, reassuringly, as we left the room.

At lunch we decided that the youth was intending to desert. It was Davis who brought that ugly word, "desert," into the conversation.

"It's none of our business, I suppose," said Davis. "He's his own boss." Then we talked of other things.

And we tried to dismiss the subject from our minds, as we had dismissed it from our conversation. But in my mind it would not down, and in the minds of McCutcheon, Davis,

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and Hare it did not down. The picture of that youth, sitting in our room, homesick and in trouble—in how much trouble we did not really know—was before us all, and our lunch, usually the cheeriest event of the day, aside from dinner, proved a dismal matter.

We went back to the room after an hour. There sat the boy, facing us like a duty, like an unsolved problem, like a task that we had tried to avoid but that must be done. And the boat would leave in two hours.

McCutcheon braced himself and, after clearing his throat, said to the youth, calling him by name:

“Do you think it’s quite safe for you to try to get on that boat this afternoon? Wouldn’t you be in trouble if you were caught in civilian clothes boarding that boat?”

“Oh, I’ve taken too many chances in my time to care for a little risk like that,” answered the youth. “It’s only a walk of two hundred feet. I’ve been sitting at the window gauging the distance, all morning; I know every step of it. I’ve walked it a thousand times already to-day in my mind, and walking it in your mind is just as unpleasant as really doing it.”

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"But wouldn't you be shot for desertion in war-time, if you were caught?"

"Yes, but any fellow 'll be shot if he sticks to the war game long enough, so what difference does it make?"

Richard Harding Davis expressed with a masterly faithfulness to detail, spirit, and even actual words the conversation which took place in Room 14 that afternoon in his story, the last story that was ever to come from his brilliant pen, "The Deserter," and I shall not repeat it.

But there was one thing that was done that afternoon that Davis did not put into his story. When the argument was hottest, when the youth was declaring, with his eyes on the boat that would bear him to freedom, that he was sick of it all, that he was willing to risk being shot as a deserter, that he owed nothing to Great Britain; when Davis was declaring that he owed something to himself and that even if he wasn't caught in that short trip of a hundred steps to the boat and shot, his life would be a failure, in all events, because a man who had deserted never could look his fellows in the face again and never could have the courage which brings success in any walk of

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life—the youth tore off his coat and vest, jerked his shirts from under his trousers belt, and bared his stomach.

“Look at that scar!” he almost yelled. “Look at that scar and tell me if that doesn’t entitle me to freedom and to go back to my father and mother at home! What the hell do you fellows know about how I feel? I got that scar nine months ago, saving a man’s life. I got out of a trench and rolled out in No Man’s Land like a barrel to a wounded man who was begging for water. I rolled over and over and over, with bullets flying all around me, and I got the man, too! I brought him back to the trench. But a bullet went across my stomach. It went right through a gut, and when they got us both into the trench they tried to make me take a drink of water. But I knew better. I didn’t take it. I knew that a man who is shot through the gut will be only killing himself if he puts even a drink of water into his stomach. I was in the hospital for three months with this wound. I’ve done my share, I tell you. You fellows don’t understand. You don’t even know what I’m talking about. Why, you can’t. Here you are, with your fine beds and your decent meals, and

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you can come and go as you please. What the hell right have you got to advise me? I'm going to take that boat, I tell you."

The scar was as long as the opening in a football, and it had been laced close with many stitches that had left their crisscross marks.

"You're a fool to throw away a scar like that. Why, there are thousands of British officers and soldiers who'd give fortunes to have a scar like that!"

One of the four of us said this, quietly. There was a note of astonishment in the remark.

The rest of us took up the point.

"Do you mean to say, after you've got a magnificent scar like that one, that you're going to desert and get your name on the black book? Why, you won't dare to show that scar to anybody! How can you ever be proud of it, if you sneak away now?" said Davis.

I don't think Davis really believed that the scar was a battle wound. He did not mention the scar, as I have pointed out, in his story. I know I had my doubts about it, and so did Hare and McCutcheon. It might have been the mark of an ordinary operation for appendicitis. We felt, I think, that if it had been an honorable scar the youth would have proudly



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displayed it to us earlier. And, also, we felt that no soldier in his right mind would think of ruining the value of a wound like that by desertion. But the scar gave us a new talking point in our argument against the youth, and we used it.

And then, just at the right moment, McCutcheon said, "You fellows go on to the moving-picture show." We were glad enough to shift the problem to McCutcheon's shoulders, and we departed, somewhat hastily, leaving McCutcheon with the soldier.

The water-front was filled with a thousand activities when we came out from the little theater into the weak glare of the early-evening street lights; beyond, in the harbor, great ships moved slowly, here and there, and hundreds of small barks passed this way and that. But it was to the pier, where the one dirty little Greek boat had been tied, that we turned our attention. The boat was gone; far out in the bay we could see it heading into the sunset, bound for Athens.

When we got back to the room Davis opened the door with an energy born of an intense curiosity which he did not try to hide.

There was the youth with the scar half

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dressed. My suit was lying in a heap on the floor and, in place of my trousers, the soldier was wearing his dirt-covered khaki breeches. His head was just emerging from the depths of his khaki shirt.

"How was the moving-picture show?" asked McCutcheon.

"Rotten, as usual," said Davis. And while the youth dressed we talked of how bad a moving-picture show in Salonica really could be.

At last he was in his clothes, fully garbed as a soldier. The wrinkled, muddy overcoat, the coarse shoes, the crushed and dirty khaki cap, the raglike khaki puttees, all the parts of his garb which he had thrown away with such intense relief in the morning, expecting never to wear again, had once more become a part of him.

"It's bad enough to get into these things again, after I said good-by to them," volunteered the youth, as he settled his overcoat on to his shoulders by shrugging them; "but my trouble is only beginning. You know, I didn't come here on leave of absence to-day. I ran away from camp. That's pretty bad, you know. But, on top of it all, I've shaved off

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my mustache, and when they notice that back in camp I'll go right to the guard-house. It's a military offense."

"Tell them you got drunk and shaved it off because a girl wanted you to," suggested one of us.

The youth did not answer this suggestion. Instead, he strode toward the door.

"If there's anything we can do for you, let us know, won't you?" said McCutcheon.

"Well, there is one thing you can do," said the boy.

"What is it?"

"You can all go to hell."

And out he went to take his medicine.

"Some wrench!" exclaimed Davis. "It took some wrench of the will for that fellow to change his mind."

Our room, with its beds and rugs and big easy-chairs, looked effeminately, disgustingly comfortable.

"This is my story!" exclaimed Davis, suddenly. "This is my story. I yelled first. Best war story I ever knew." It was characteristic of Davis that he should attribute to John McCutcheon the cartoonist, Jimmy Hare the war photographer, and me, the war-

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news writer, the ability to write the same masterpiece that he had in mind. His art came to him so easily that he saw no difficulties in it. If he didn't yell first, in line with the school-boy rule that "First yellers are owners," any one of us might take his masterpiece away from him. So we all seriously renounced all rights to the plot. And then we went out to the Restaurant Flocca for dinner.

Now I have finished telling all that Davis ever knew about the youth with the scar. Two weeks later Davis sailed for the United States, and in due time his story, "The Deserter," was published in the *Metropolitan Magazine*.

Some three weeks later a sailor came to our room early one morning with a note, which read, in effect:

Fellows,—Can one of you come down to the Red Cross lighter at the pier? They're taking me away to Alexandria to a hospital, and I want to say good-by to you all.

Yours,

---

All three of us hurried down to the pier, for our curiosity as to what had befallen the youth after he had stamped out of our room that night was great. On the floor of the little

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boat, which was to carry him out to the great white hospital-ship in the bay, lying on a stretcher among scores of other sick soldiers, we found him looking pitifully thin and pale.

"Well, you see they've got me in the sick-bay," he said, by way of greeting. "They say there is something the matter with my bowels and they've got to cut me open again. I'm going to the big hospital at Alexandria."

"How did you come out in camp?" asked Hare.

"Oh, they gave it to me good. But they still think I got drunk. They took away my stripes and made me a private, and they grabbed on to my salary for two months. But I was taken sick the night that I got back to camp and I've been laid up ever since. So they couldn't lock me up or give me any other punishment. Gee! but the captain was surprised! He said he had always counted on me as a teetotaler, and that he was grieved and disappointed in me. And, just think! I've never taken a drink in my life."

"I thought you weren't quite yourself when you left us that night," said McCutcheon.

"Well, if I was sick, I didn't know it. I was only disgusted with everything. Say, will you

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mail a letter for me? It's a letter for my girl in New Orleans, and I don't want the military censor to read it. It's all right for a strange censor to read your love-letters, but I hate to have the men I mix up with every day read what I write to my girl."

I took the letter, and we said good-by a second time to the boy with the scar. That night, at sunset, the big white hospital-ship put on way and slid from the harbor into the Ægean Sea for its trip across the Mediterranean to the warmth and sunshine of Egypt.

Three months later, in the Strand, in London, I felt an arm slip around my shoulders, and I turned to see the face of the youth with the scar. It was smiling and well hued. We broke our one-sided, college-boy clinch to shake hands. He was still in khaki, and on his sleeve I saw the stripes of a sergeant

"Lunch!" he said. "Lunch! Come on to lunch with me and I'll tell you all about it. I was broke in Salonica, but the governor has sent me a wad of money and a letter forgiving me for joining the army and telling me how proud he is of me. Everything turned out all right. Come on to lunch!"

On his left breast the youth wore a little

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piece of ribbon. I recognized it as the honor given by the British for distinguished service on the field of battle.

"You've got a story to tell, young man," I said. "Come up to my room in the Savoy and tell it. Then we can go to lunch."

"Well, it's short and sweet," said the youth, as he lighted a cigar in my room a moment or two later. "I'm still in the British army, and I'm a sergeant once more, and I've got the D. S. M. And next week my regiment goes to France, and I'm going with them. My girl wants me to come home, but I'm going to see it through. I don't want to quit in the fifth inning."

"What happened to you after you got to Alexandria?" I asked.

"Oh, they found that my gut had grown together where the bullet cut it, and they had to open me twice to fix it. They found I was in a pretty bad way. Do you know, sometimes I think that when I was in your room that day I must have been sick and didn't know it?"

"I've always suspected that," I said.

"Well, after I got better at Alexandria they moved me back to England on a hospital-ship and put me into a hospital in Manchester to

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convalesce. I convalesced, all right, in a hurry, and on the day I was released they told me a certain major wanted to see me. I went to the major's office and was shown in with a lot of ceremony. I couldn't understand it.

"‘Sergeant Whitling?’ says the major.” (I do not give the real name.) “‘Beg pardon, sir. Private Whitling! I was reduced to the ranks.’ ‘You are mistaken,’ says the major, ‘Sergeant Whitling. You have been restored, and it is my duty to invest you with the medal for distinguished service on the field.’

“‘You could have knocked me over. I came out and laid all my cards on the table. ‘It can’t be me,’ I told him. ‘Why, I wanted to desert at Salonica, and they degraded me.’

“‘Wanting to desert isn’t any crime, my boy,’ says the major. ‘You didn’t desert, did you? Well, there you are. Why, I’ve wanted to desert, myself, at times. But I haven’t got anything to do with that. It’s my duty to perform the ceremony of presenting you with this honor from His Majesty, the King, and, if it’s convenient for you, we’ll set the occasion for tomorrow.’

“‘Can’t you give it to me now, sir?’ I asked. I could see what was coming.



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“The major only laughed at me. ‘To-morrow at ten in the forenoon,’ he said. ‘It’s got to be gone through with, you know. King’s regulations and all that sort of thing.’

“So the next day a lot of soldiers were drawn up in a square on the parade-grounds, and I was called out and had to stand up in front of the major while he read out loud kind of an official story telling how I had rolled out between the trenches like a barrel and brought in a wounded man and got wounded myself. Same story I told you fellows in Salonica, you know. Then he pinned this ribbon on me.

“Do you know what this ribbon means? It means I’m a King’s sergeant. I haven’t been promoted by any ordinary routine. My papers say that His Majesty, the King, appointed me a sergeant in His Majesty’s army. And nobody can remove me but the King. And, if I get in any kind of trouble, any time, I’ve got a right to go to Buckingham Palace and appeal to the King himself. It’s an old English custom.”

The youth dug into his hip pocket and brought forth a paper.

“Read this,” he said. True enough, I saw that “His Gracious Majesty, by These Pres-

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ents," declared in this paper that, in effect, the youth with the scar was a hero, deserving of honor at the hands of the King and of the British people.

"Gee! That was a long time coming," said the youth. "And if it hadn't been for you fellows in Salonica I'd have missed it. I almost threw it all away. Ten months is too long to have to wait for a thing like this, don't you think? One thing I was disgusted with in Salonica was that no one had ever patted me on the back for getting that fellow. I thought the British were acting as if they felt an American ought not to be honored for special stunts. It kind of got my goat. And besides, you know, I still think that I was sick and didn't know it."

"You were," I said; "you were too sick to make any decisions for yourself."

"And so you fellows stepped in, just when I needed help, and made my decisions for me. I was sick. Just look what they had to do to me," he said.

He opened the tunic of his clean, new uniform and drew his shirt out of his trousers, just as he had done in Salonica. But this time I saw three scars: The old one and two new ones

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where the surgeons had cut to set his old wound aright.

"I never can thank Davis and you fellows enough," he said, "for steering me the right way."

"You know Davis is dead, don't you?" I asked. "Dropped dead with heart disease."

"No," groaned the boy. "Then he still thinks I'm yellow."

"If he thinks at all," I said, "he knows now that you're all right."

Two days later I said good-by to the youth with the scar for a third time. With hundreds of soldiers he was boarding a train at Charing Cross Station to go back to the welter of war.

I don't know whether he's still alive or not. Perhaps a certain girl in New Orleans knows about that part of it.



THERE ARE WORSE THINGS THAN  
SLAUGHTER



## THERE ARE WORSE THINGS THAN SLAUGHTER

**M**Y impressions of the effect that war-time surroundings may have upon human beings are not pleasant. I have been knee-deep in war, and I know it in all its aspects; and if I had a son who was leaving for the front to-day I would say to him:

“My boy! Fight as hard as you can and do not risk your life in foolhardiness; but, above all, cling more tightly to your ideals and your code than you do to life itself. You are facing the supreme test of your personal character. If you lose, it would be better for you to die.”

“Isn’t the slaughter terrible?”

Everybody who returns to the United States from the war in Europe is asked this question, trite as it seems.

My answer must always be:

“Dying and killing are not the most horrible things that war brings to a man, woman, or

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child. In Europe you see worse things than dying or killing. Worse things happen to European folk than being killed or crippled."

The first dead men I saw in the war, back in those early and old-time days in Belgium, struck me as having been uselessly murdered, and the sight left a baleful impression on my mind for a time. To my surprise, however, I soon beheld such sights without emotion. But there was one sight—one manifestation of the horrors of war—that I could not accustom myself to view without a mental shudder. This was the sight of vast bodies of men marching or camping.

There they were, men of family, of business, of ideals, of religion, all brought down to the same level—all alike. Like barrels whose hoops have been removed, these men, individually, in their lives and in their characters have fallen apart since the binding support of their home environment has been taken away from round about them. The impression that they were like animals, like herded, unthinking beasts, was so strong upon me that at night in my sleep, instead of seeing dead and mangled bodies, I saw in my dreams vast bodies of soldiers passing before me, each man wearing the



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head of some beast instead of his own. They were not brutal, leonine men-animals I saw; only patient, dumb, obedient, long-suffering, kindly ones, such as cattle, deer, horses, dogs.

To be turned into such a man is worse than death, and among thinking men in the seven armies that I saw at close range I often found soldiers and officers who realized what sort of beings they had become. There are penalties just short of death for men in the various armies who sicken of being unthinking men-animals and try to find a way out of their plight by suicide—who stick their heads above the trenches or who wound themselves with their own rifles.

It is worse than death for a man to get into his head the idea that he has the right to kill. Such an idea destroys his value as a citizen and heads him toward the gibbet. Yet this idea is fastening itself in the minds of thousands of men in Europe. On a battle-field killing may not be murder; but when a man takes the killing idea into his private life and uses it as a solution of his personal and private difficulties, he might better be killed in war and have it over with.

The other day in London a soldier, home on

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leave of absence from the front, tried in vain to take an afternoon nap. He shouted from his window to a group of women and children in the courtyard that their jabbering and laughing were not to his liking. They jeered at him. The soldier took a hand-bomb from his pack, the sort that he had thrown in the trenches by the hundred with intent to kill, and tossed it into the courtyard. He killed three people.

I once carried a Russian rifle—which an Austrian officer had presented to me as a token of Austrian prowess in the capture of Przemyśl—into a little hotel in the town of Alt Sandec, where a dozen minor Austrian officers were sitting at a table. They viewed the trophy with excited and somewhat jubilant interest. Then one officer drew a Russian rifle-cartridge from his pocket, placed it in the rifle, raised the weapon, and, deliberately pointing it at the white-haired Jewish proprietor of the hotel, who stood some twenty feet distant, pulled the trigger. The bullet missed the old man, but it was a close call. The room filled with powder smoke, which rose slowly to the ceiling.

Powder has two different smells. As a police reporter I have gone into rooms in various American cities where murder or suicide has

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been done, and I know the scent of powder under such conditions. As a war reporter I have smelled the smoke of powder on the battlefield. There's a difference in the odor, even if the powder be the same. The murder-powder smoke in the little hotel in Alt Sandec that night gave me a feeling of nausea, and I jerked my memento rifle from the laughing young subaltern and went away from the place.

Only a few months before the young fellow had been a rising young architect in the city of Vienna. Later in the evening he hunted up Robert Dunn, then of the New York *Evening Post*, and myself, and asked us to tell one of his superior officers that the rifle had gone off by accident. The officer had threatened to punish him for—drunkenness!

Some terrible change had come to the mind of that young man, a change that brought as great harm to him as anything that could happen to him, even death itself.

In Villers-Cotterets, in September of 1914, during the aftermath of the battle of the Marne, I was arrested by the British for being out of bounds, and was held for several days in the village, with the privilege of going about the town as I pleased. Villers-Cotterets had been

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fought over twice. The Germans had taken it once, and the French had regained it, so that the village folk had been given plenty of opportunity to know what war looked like.

In the afternoon, after school was out, I used to go to the grounds of the old château to watch the boys of the village play "soldiers," as they called it. They did not play "soldiers" as American boys who have never seen war might play it. They did not have paper caps and wooden swords and drums and tissue-paper cockades; in fact, their game was not "soldiers," but "war." They chose sides, these French school-boys who had seen dead men, killed in battle, like American boys choosing sides for "one old cat" or "pom! pom! pull-away." Then, under the chestnut trees, with huge horse-chestnuts—and sometimes with stones when the supply of chestnuts gave out—they fought it out.

I have seen a boy of ten with his scalp laid open, his face covered with blood, grunting with exertion, cursing, wild-eyed, playing "war" in this fashion on the beautiful sward under the majestic chestnuts of the old château at Villers-Cotterets, heedless of his wounds, desperately trying to bring blood to the surface of the per-

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sons of comrades with whom on that same afternoon he had sat at his studies in the village school.

These boys were only imitating their fathers. All their lives these boys of Villers-Cotterets, like millions of other boys in Europe on whom war has worked its change, will be ready for war, alert to make their boyhood play come true.

Wars come about every thirty years, it is said. Is this because of the fact that every thirty years the boy who played "war" grows to be a man and wants to see his play made real? With this question in mind, it was gruesome business to watch the youngsters of Villers-Cotterets at play. It was like seeing new war-clouds form in the mists of the distant future—storms of war that were to be brought down on the head of humanity by statesmen still in smocks and knee-breeches. It was like seeing an eternal death sentence of war passed upon humankind.

"Which side are the Germans?" I asked the general of one of the chestnut armies.

"The side that is whipped, monsieur," he said, grinning in spite of a black eye.

You'll never weed hate for the Germans out of the minds of French boys who fought at their

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play, as they did, to draw imaginary German blood. War slaughters, which is bad enough; but it creates new and distant slaughters, which is worse.

The moral and mental disintegration that is caused by military service in individual cases is shocking. This applies to all armies that I have seen.

"That fellow would be better dead," said a friend of mine, as an Englishman we had known in peace times walked away from us after a chance meeting in the Strand. "Everything that was good in him is dead already."

Only a year before, this man had been a star of Fleet Street. He wrote with a sympathy and an understanding of human nature that made his work stand out. But as we saw him, after a year in the army as an uncommissioned officer, the grime of war was on his soul as well as on his body.

"I've quit writing," he said, with a weak grin that displayed the absence of two front teeth. "Something's happened to me. I can't ever write again. I don't even try to do it. Anyhow, what's the use? It's all war."

The man that he had been a year before would have killed himself with his own gun

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rather than become the man we saw and talked with that afternoon in the Strand.

His was only a typical case. Every mother, sister, and wife in Europe has seen some change of this sort take place among the men-folk she knows. Sometimes it is less, but sometimes death would be better than the upheaving conversion to baseness which war produces.

“No more books or music and no more women. I’m simply rotting mentally.” I have had officers make this confession to me in five different languages in seven different armies. “I’m rotting, and I can’t help it.”

Not all the bad things of war happen to human bodies.

THE END





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